MORALITY AND NATURE

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THE history of moral thought, from the Greeks to the present day, shows the recurrence of the view that morality is founded on "nature" or "the nature of things". My object in this paper is to discuss this view.

I

First, I must try to explain it, which has its difficulties. Not only are there different versions, some of which differ radically, but the use of the words "nature" and "natural" is notoriously elusive and diverse. How they are used can only be determined from the context; and often only by contrast with something to which they are being opposed. Sometimes "natural" is contrasted with "supernatural" or "divine"; sometimes with "artificial" and with "acquired"; in one context it is identified with what has some objective existence, in another with what is given in sensible experience, in another still with what has a "reason" or "explanation"; sometimes "nature" is used for the whole of experience; sometimes "what man meets in nature" is contrasted with "what he meets in himself". I must therefore begin by asking: in what contexts, and in opposition to what views, has the doctrine of the naturalness of the moral order been developed?

Most often it has been put forward in opposition to the view that moral laws are commands issued by some divine authority. What is denied here is not that a divine will may desire man to live by moral rules, but that moral rules *consist in* divine commands. No matter whether or not God

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has informed man of his duties, these duties have a natural existence *independent* of a divine will, and indeed whether or not such a will exists. Here "natural" is used in opposition to "supernatural" or "divine". But it is also used here to oppose a further implication of the theological view, an implication the latter shares with another, with the view that morality is founded on immemorial custom or convention, and that moral laws are demands issuing from this source. For both imply that morality is somehow the product of artifice; a moral order can be posited at will by divine or human agency. And from this point of view, to insist that morality is founded on nature is to deny *this* implication. Moral laws do not owe their being to wilful caprice; they are "natural" in the sense that they are no less a constituent of the objective world than the laws of nature. Like the latter, they cannot be created or destroyed by any positive enactment. They are not made, they are discovered.

But to insist on the objective existence of moral demands in this sense, and to call this an existence in "nature", is not yet to settle whereabouts in "nature" they subsist, or what sort of being they have; and this introduces a new cleavage of opinion. According to some, moral laws exist objectively in the "universe", or "the nature of things and situations"; and here "universe" and "nature" are used roughly in the sense in which we contrast what we meet in "nature" with what we meet in ourselves, in our own mind or feelings. This view became prominent in the eighteenth century, with moralists like Samuel Clarke and Richard Price, after it had always been an undercurrent in the doctrine of the naturalness of the moral order since the Stoics; and it is the one which prevails today among the "intuitionists", the leading school of contemporary British moralists. Broadly, this view amounts to saying that moral duties are demands or claims on man residing somehow in his environment, in the "situation" in which he acts, though how and where, it is said, cannot be further described. In this connection it is noteworthy that, for this school of thought, moral duties,

though existing "in the nature of things", are not "natural existents" in another familiar use of this term; they are not facts given to sense, or constructions out of what is given to sense. They belong to a "supersensible" nature which is *sui generis,* and is perceptible only by a special faculty of moral intuition. To say that morality is founded on "nature" is not here to say it rests on empirical foundations.

But the main view of the naturalness of the moral order, from the Stoics to at least the middle of the eighteenth century, was another. Here man's subjection to moral laws is said to be founded on nature not as he finds it without himself, but in himself, on human nature. A passage from Bishop Butler, one of the great exponents of this view, will illustrate this point. "Nothing", he says, "can be more evident . . . than that, exclusive of revelation, man cannot be considered as a creature left by his maker to act at random . . .: but from his make, constitution, or nature he is in the strictest sense a law to himself. He has the rule of right within: what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it". The broad drift of this is plain: man's subjection to moral laws, to injunctions and prohibitions which set a standard of right and wrong conduct, is founded on facts to be met within man himself, in his psychological constitution. And this, we shall see, entails a view of the naturalness of the moral order radically different from, and more complex than, the one we have hitherto considered.

I shall be concerned in this paper mainly with this last view; and once again, we shall not understand it unless we consider it in relation to the views to which it is opposed. Traditionally, it is a middle-of-the-road position, the resort of those who are unwilling to subscribe in ethics to what I may call transcendentalism on the one hand and scepticism on the other. By scepticism, I mean the view that binding moral duties have no manner of real being: the belief in them rests on a misinterpretation of the facts. By transcendentalism, I shall now mean jointly the theological and conventionalist, and also the intuitionist views previously distinguished. By

contrast with the view I wish now to consider it is justifiable to group them together, for in spite of their opposition to one another they retain some crucial characteristics in common. This may not be immediately apparent. But, in fact, all three are agreed on the externality of moral demands to man: they resemble orders, or claims, made on him from some external source. Moreover, both the purely theological view and its intuitionist opponents are agreed that the source of these orders is beyond nature in at least one sense: it is wholly beyond the sensibly given and accessible only by special cognitive means, either by faith or by a privileged kind of intuition. Now, both transcendentalism and scepticism are typical features of man's view of morality; in fact, the one has often provoked, and is always apt to provoke, the other. The rule of transcendentalist ethics in whatever form tends to end in a crisis of moral scepticism; and the doctrine that morality is founded not simply on nature but on human nature must be understood as the recurrent attempt to meet this crisis.

It is necessary, therefore, to mention the main reasons for the vulnerability of all forms of transcendentalist ethics to scepticism; for they reveal the weaknesses which an alternative theory would have to meet. One reason is in the special claims which transcendentalist ethics make for the possibility of moral knowledge. Whether such knowledge is made to rest on faith or on a special kind of intuition, it is made to rest on some supersensible, and in a sense therefore, "non-natural" source of information; and that there are these peculiar sources is not sufficiently evident to everyone to exclude the doubt that our so-called moral duties are not merely spectres seen by fanciful minds in the dark. But even granted their existence, there is another difficulty concerning their *bindingness*. We are asked to think of moral duties somehow as orders or demands from without; and this raises the awkward question of people's reasons for complying with them, especially when their inclinations and interests are opposed. We say, people have a reason when something

in the thought of an act, some anticipated property or effect of it, has the power to make them do it; and we assume that without this people cannot be expected to act, let alone act against their inclinations which are the impulses which already possess them. But it is plain, when a person is *ordered* to do a thing, this is still quite different from his having a motive for doing this same thing: the one is logically separable from the other. No matter if Jones orders Smith to turn down his radio; this does not in itself seriously bind Smith to do it; and no more would any transcendentalist system of moral imperatives in itself be a system of seriously binding obligations. Acquired habits of obedience, or the fear of external sanctions, may conceal this weakness from the ordinary man. But one day someone will notice it; and then it is not far to conclude that the so-called bonds of morality are shams; that they are not only doubtful as regards their existence, but that in any case they are in themselves not seriously bonds at all.[1] And if this is so, why should not everyone just do as he pleases?

I hope this will help to show why so many moralists, from the Stoics to Hugo Grotius, Pufendorf, and Bishop Butler, have attempted to seek the foundations of morality elsewhere. It will explain why they sought an alternative to the theological and conventionalist views of the moral order, views which plainly invite sceptical attack; and also why they evolved a view of morality with its foundations in human rather than in some supersensible "external" nature.

The question is: shall we fare better if we seek them there? The traditional argument runs, the facts here speak for themselves. Suppose people followed the moral sceptic and discounted duties in all their externalist interpretations. Even so, they would not find themselves freed from obligations in *every sense*: something would continue to demand that they should do some things and not do others; and this remaining authority would be in *their own thoughts*. People

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[1] I have discussed this more fully in *Ought and Motivation,* Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1948.

need only reflect on their prospective acts and consider what they would entail: what it would be to break one's promises, to ignore the laws of the State, to disregard the interests of others, to neglect oneself. It will then appear that these thoughts have a power, contrary to their inclinations, to deter them from some acts and to impel them to others. According to most exponents of the view, it is the relation of acts to the promotion of social good, and the good of the agent himself, that lends the thought of them this power to impel or to deter. According to others, the matter is more complicated; men have also an innate capacity to value honesty or fair dealing and to disvalue perjury or injustice as such and apart from their consequences, and likewise many other things. But all are agreed on this: if only people were first to *contemplate* what they are about to do, these thoughts would provide them with motives, contrary to their inclinations, to forbear some things and to do others. And there would be something special about these motives. They not only impel, but in a peculiar way they compel; they not merely prompt, but *dictate*. They furnish, therefore, what deserves to be called an inner sense of obligation, of "ought" and "ought not"; and as the proximate cause of these motives is reflection they may be called rational motives and the obligations "dictates of reason". The sceptic's denial of binding duties in their transcendentalist interpretation cannot therefore rid man in some other sense of the conflict between duty and inclination; this conflict remains, transformed only from a conflict between man's will and outside claims on him to a conflict within his will itself.

Now, if true, this view is more likely to support the objective existence of a binding moral order against scepticism than the view that morality is founded on some esoteric "nature of things and situations". For the foundations of the moral order are here conceived as "natural" in a more familiar and less dubious sense of the term. For one thing, what are here called "natural" obligations would in one sense be facts of nature in their ordinary empirical meaning. To

perceive them would require no special powers of intuition. Again, what is here meant by "obligation" or a "dictate of reason" is "naturally" binding, that is binding in the only way in which it makes sense to say that men *can* be seriously bound. For there is no need here to ask for a motive; in fact, to do so would be logically absurd. We only say here people are under obligations to actions when we mean they have, contrary to their inclinations, a specially compelling or deterring motive for doing or not doing them. It is tempting, therefore, to conclude that the view that morality is founded on human nature amounts to this: man's subjection to duties is a datum of his inner experience like *any other psychological fact*, a fact which the sceptic can be invited to verify by using his ordinary powers of reflection and self-observation.

But to say this would be too simple. There is a difficulty in describing a dictate of reason, as here used, as in all respects an ordinary fact of nature like any other psycho-logical fact, an emotion, or inclination. There is a sense in which we would contrast emotions or inclinations, as belonging to the "natural" man in us, with a "dictate of reason" as not belonging to the "natural man" in quite the same sense; and this makes it necessary to specify more carefully what is meant by saying that the moral order is founded on human nature. Bishop Butler, for instance, was aware of this diffi-culty, as, implicitly, were most exponents of the view, and an explanation is not far to seek. The point is that a "dictate of reason" is conceived as an impulse which would arise only *if people reflected* on their projected doings or omissions; and an impulse like this we do not meet in our experience except by our own concurrence, by exerting ourselves mentally. But our own mental exertions we do not regard as, in the ordinary sense, a "fact of nature". We only use this word for occur-rences which we do not hesitate to regard as causally con-ditioned by an indefinite series of antecedents; and we hesi-tate to regard our own active mental life in quite this light. The whole of it as we live through it, and when we review it always at least part of it, is not viewed as related to a chain

of antecedent causes; in whole or in part it invariably appears as having its first beginning in and with our active self. We cannot, therefore, without violating language call our own active mental life a "fact of nature" like any other; nor what would exist only by its mediation. And this is the case with a "dictate of reason". As it would have no being except on condition of our own and seemingly free concurrence, it would not be altogether a "natural" or psychological fact like a stab of pain or a fit of jealousy. Unlike them, it would be a datum of inner experience sought out and evoked by ourselves, and not simply incurred. It has, therefore, been rightly felt that to speak of morality as founded on human nature is to use "nature" in a specially broad sense; not indeed for anything that lies *beyond* experience; but for experience as including what is felt in spontaneous activity, what results from it, and what is purely of its own or sensibly given; that is, in a sense which allows us to say also, using the word more narrowly, that morality is founded on what in man is "nature" and what is not "nature" but mind. In this sense "natural obligations" used to be spoken of as "dictates of reason and nature".

Besides this, "natural" as applied to the foundations of morality has traditionally some further connotations. It also means "transparent to reason" or "explicable";; and in this sense, with the partial exception of Bishop Butler, "naturalness" is also usually attributed to the moral order both in its essence and in its content. That man is subject to moral dictates is not a brute datum; it is claimed it strictly follows from his being a creature of both appetite and reason. Equally, the whole matter of his duties, it is assumed, can be derived from some simple and ultimate data about him; from his dispositions to value social good and his own, and from the effects on social and private good of his actions. These data are said to entail all his duties towards others, the State, and himself; they can, without difficulty, be deduced from them. And lastly, not only is the moral order "natural" in this sense of being explicable in terms of other simpler

facts, but these facts themselves are said to be, in still another sense, "natural" to man. The possession of reason, and of dispositions to value good, is of his "nature" *as constituting his formal essence*; so that, when he acts in accordance with rules resting on these foundations, he will be fulfilling what he essentially is, or has been cut out to be.

So much in explanation of what may be called the "classical doctrine" that morality is founded on human nature. What, then, are its merits? I think its attractiveness as an antidote both to a dubious transcendentalism and a frank scepticism is beyond question. Its insistence on the inwardness of some sense of obligation, and on its foundations in the conative and rational properties of man, has a ring of truth. Nevertheless, as an account of what moral belief and moral talk are all about only few today would be ready to defend it. On the contrary it is not too much to say that the wholesale rejection of this point of view is one of the few points of agreement between the conflicting schools of contemporary moralists.

What prevails today is a transcendentalism clinging, for what it is worth, to the external existence in some supersensible "nature" of moral demands on man; and a rising scepticism which denies to moral obligations any objective being. "You ought", according to the logical positivist, states no moral truth but simply expresses the speaker's feelings or will to persuade; and "I ought", I suppose, comes to something like saying to oneself "Gee up". Existentialists like Sartre are similarly disillusioned. "If God does not exist", Sartre writes, "everything is permitted, and hence man is deserted, as neither *in* himself nor *outside* himself can he find anything to hold on to; he nowhere meets values or imperatives to justify or excuse anything he does." Between these extremes the traditional third way of the classical doctrine has come to be regarded as naive and outmoded.

There are reasons for this, partly in the temper of our age, partly in the insufficiencies of the traditional expositions

of this doctrine. None of them can stand up to present standards of analysis. The language is confused; the terms are undefined; there is a naive trust in the simplicity and permanence of human nature; a faulty psychology; a misplaced confidence in the powers of reason and observation to settle moral issues with ease, with no less facility, at least, than scientific issues. Moreover, towards the end of the eighteenth century the classical doctrine suffered a misfortune. It was both improved and mangled by Kant who, in an attempt to revise it, refined its form to the point of squashing its life. Nevertheless, I venture to say, the reaction against it has gone too far, with the uncomfortable results we are witnessing. This is not the place to explain this at length, but I shall offer the outlines of a defence.

II.

At heart, I think, the "classical doctrine" rested on a simple truth. Man might be stripped of everything he ever believed about moral restraints; he would still, in his constitution, find impediments to acting quite at random. For there is in him what might be called a "natural machinery for self-control" which rests on the capacity of *forethought* causally to control volition. It is commonplace that a man who foresees the nature and consequences of his actions will tend to refrain from some to which he had been inclined, and to do others to which he had been indifferent or averse. However, this mechanism is conceived too simply, as was done by the Greeks, and is done again today by some logical positivists, if control by *forethought* is equated simply with control by *knowledge or belief*. In order to evoke a conative response, knowledge of fact about future acts requires more than a suitably disposed recipient; it also needs being mentally rehearsed, dwelled upon, chewed over in various ways. The so-called "guidance of conduct by reason" involves processes both of exploration and of evaluation of fact; and the latter, though also "rational", are not processes of cognition but of mental presentation or attention. They are "thinkings of",

not "believings that", and only in conjunction with them can knowledge of fact be said to be able to control volitions.

Before I go on I had better elucidate this last point. It can be illustrated by the observation that ignorance of fact is not all that people plead in extenuation of omissions. A man who has failed to act on his doctor's information that an operation will restore him to health—which is what he desires—may plead, "Of course, I knew, but I never took it in properly; I never actually put it to myself and let it sink in that to do the one would implicitly also be achieving the other which I desired". Here the fault is ascribed not to ignorance of fact but to *obtuseness,* to the lack of appropriate rehearsing of what was known, a rehearsing which may be called, as it would direct the desire for an end to the means to it, *directive* evaluative thinking. Again, the same man, though impressed by what he has been told, may yet be put off by the anticipation of expense and discomfort; and in extenuation he may plead here: "I knew what would be involved, expense and discomfort on the one hand, cure on the other; but I never properly *contemplated* these conflicting implications *alongside each other*; so I failed to give *due weight* to the curative effect." Here we may speak of the absence of proper *selective* evaluative thinking. And again, there is a third plea of this sort. Our man may say: "I knew the operation would restore my health, but at the time I felt indifferent to that; I never troubled to *envisage* 'getting well' as such an end for me; and yet, had I done so, I would have been roused from my apathy". Here the fault is ascribed to a failure to evaluate, by means of imaginative presentation, the potential attractiveness of an end in itself; a failure, we may call it, in *elective* evaluative thinking.

In this sense, then, we may speak of a "natural machinery for self-control", provided always we understand it to consist of the control of volitions by both processes of exploration and evaluation. It is a machinery in virtue of which humans tend to live on two levels of volitional consciousness, and to experience conflict between them: the level of their immediate

desires and the level of what, under the influence of fore-
thought, their desires would become; and in this the classical
doctrine claims, and I think with some justification, are the
foundations of a species of knowledge which is doing the
direction-giving work commonly attributed to *moral* know-
ledge. For a man aware of the possible clash between his
immediate and his "rational" impulses or motives may with
good sense enquire before acting: "Would I still want what I
do want, or still not want what I am averse from, if I first
stopped to explore and to evaluate the facts about it?" And
having done so he may come to judge: "These are the facts
and, if I contemplated them, they would provide reasons, and,
on balance, compelling reasons, for me not to do the one, or
to do the other." The function of such enquiry and judgment
would be to organize and assist the working of the "natural
machinery". "Would I still want if . . .?" will organise the
quest for the facts about the act possibly relevant to a change
of practical attitude; for without the facts there can be no
answer; and again, it will organise experimental evaluative
thinking in order to elicit what responses a *viewing* of the
facts would entail, i.e., if they were *envisaged* as possible
ends in themselves, or as means to ends already desired, or
as rivals conflicting with one another. The result would be
a knowledge of rational motives acting as a potential impedi-
ment to action from inclination; and even with nothing else
to "hold on to" but knowledge of this type humans could be
said to possess, in virtue of their very constitution, some
specifically direction-giving knowledge.

However, even if this be granted, this cannot be the
whole story. For the really disputed question is: Has any
of this a bearing on *morality,* on the direction of conduct by
moral concepts? Here the classical view was that it did;
in fact that the inevitability of some moral order for man was
entailed by it. And precisely this the critic denies. No doubt
forethought can *prompt* by raising new impulses or motives.
But so far this is not to mention any moral concept. "I
ought" (or "you ought") is different from "I (or "you") would

want if I (or "you") first stopped to think". The one has a
normative and coercive connotation which the other has not.
Now the classical doctrine had not quite overlooked this point.
Forethought, it had been implied, may not only prompt but
dictate. It may raise motives of a special forcibleness. But,
it must be admitted, the grounds for this assertion had not
been satisfactorily explained, even by the few who made the
attempt. And according to the modern critic this failure
is not accidental. There is no bridge that leads from any
kind of "I want" to any kind of "I ought". To maintain there
is involves the so-called "fallacy of naturalism", the error
of trying to reduce what belongs to a uniquely ethical species
of discourse to some wholly other, non-ethical and psycho-
logical one. Moral discourse either is about something
untainted by reference to anything psychological, or it is
about nothing at all. Nearly all modern moralists regard
this as axiomatic.

And yet at first sight the classical doctrine seems
plausible enough. If a person of sympathetic dispositions
thinks that an act of his would hurt the feelings of another,
and distinctly envisages what he is thinking, it seems natural
for him to say: "But, then, I *can't* want to do this", and the
"can't" seems to express some special compellingness of the
deterring motive. This point is even more evident in the use
of "I ought" within the context of prudence. For we speak
of dictates of prudence no less than of moral dictates. We
say, reluctantly, we ought to do one thing on account of some
other we desire; that we *must* will, and not merely *would* will,
the means as we desire the end. Many of the "natural
obligations" of the classical doctrine were of this form; that
we ought to act sociably if we want others to do likewise,
or be temperate if we desire our own good. And, indeed, who
would say he would *want* to stop smoking if he counted the
cost? Though some may say, if they counted it, they "ought",
or as it were, *"would have to want to"*. What, then, is involved
here in the transition from the weaker "I would want" to the
stronger "I would have to" or "ought"? I think Kant is the

only one to have seen correctly what this is. According to him, when we say we "ought", in the prudential or moral sense, we say we have, contrary to our inclinations, not only a rational but a *rationally necessary* impulse or "will" to do something, which I broadly take to mean this: "Necessary" is what no trying will alter, however often repeated; "rationally necessary" what would not be so altered by "reason", by appropriate mental operations. A both rational and rationally necessary "willing" would then be one to satisfy two conditions: that someone would own it if he used "reason", that is, foreknowledge and mental rehearsing (in our case about his ends and the means towards them); and moreover, that no further use of "reason", however often repeated, would alter it. And this is meant by a "dictate of reason": an impulse or will to action evoked by "reason" and not only casually so but in accordance with a principle of sufficiency; one which derives a special forcibleness from having the formal characteristic that no further testing by "reason" would change or dislodge it. And such an impulse will not unnaturally present itself with the normative and coercive qualities of an "ought". We don't always say that, in reason, we *would have to will* things for the sake of others which we desire; more often we say simply we *want* to do them for this reason. We only say, we would have to will them when, though knowing what they would lead to, we still don't want to do them; and this tends to happen when some aversion to the means stands in the way of a ready contemplation and evaluation of what is known. It is here that it becomes proper to ask: "But, the facts being what they are, would I not 'in reason' have to will what in fact I don't will?"; and it is because of the contrariety of our inclinations that here we wish to be assured that in reason we not only would will it, but could not get out of willing it. This conviction here thus confronts us both with an ideally inescapable objective and with an incipient impediment to acting as we please; it confronts our operative motives with the knowledge of another which, if we exercised "reason", in this case our

capacity for directive evaluative thinking, would supersede them; and the logical force of saying "I would have to will" seems precisely that which belongs to saying "I ought" or "I am obliged".

I think, then, the classical doctrine was right in speaking of dictates of "reason", fully intelligible in terms of the "natural machinery of self-control". For the conception of a rationally necessitated willing is nothing other than that of a willing informed by the ordinary powers of self-control exercised not just casually, but carried to an *ideal limit*; and our judgments about this will express, though never the certainty, but some positive likelihood that a willing of ours would conform to this formal standard of perfection. These judgments inform, or remind us, of *something about ourselves,* not, indeed, of a *given,* but of an *ideal* attitude towards an act. Their characteristic function for the direction of conduct is that they organise in a principled manner the quest for practically relevant knowledge about the world, and for its conative evaluation. They are thus ultimately about a species of psychological fact, i.e., conative responses, but not about them as they actually are, or normally tend to be, but about them as, in ideally defined conditions, they would be. Discourse of this kind is thereby marked off from the range of discourse which psychology as a science normally and appropriately regards as its own.

In fact, such discourse is as little about "purely" psychological fact as is discourse about material objects. But like the latter it may be said to be about some ideal construction out of psychological fact. As the one is about sense-experiences obeying rules of connection only approximately exemplified in actual fact, so the other is about conative responses evoked and tested in accordance with a principle of sufficiency only approximately exemplified in our actual procedures of evoking and testing them. "Ought" discourse has therefore an irreducible subject matter of its own; but this does not here commit us to saying, any more than in the case of "material object" discourse, that this subject-matter is "simple" and

"unanalysable", or that its nature is grasped by the exercise of a special faculty of "intuition". What needs saying is that the concept of 'ought', of a rationally necessary motive or willing, is not purely empirical, but has a non-empirical, or *a priori,* constituent. Experience teaches us about impulses and motives, about mental operations which tend to change them, and about such operations carried to the limit of their *de facto* effectiveness, i.e., to the point at which further repetition is in fact found to make no further difference. But experience does not teach us about any case of such operations carried to the *ideal* limit of their possible effectiveness, i.e., to the point at which no further repetition, *however far it be carried, would make any difference.* And yet, when we seek to elicit what we ought to do, this is the standard to which, by repeated acts of exploration and evaluation, we seek to approximate. A concept like 'rational necessity', like that of a mathematical point, has no instances which completely exemplify it. Such concepts, we say, are 'purely intelligible'; their object can be 'thought' or 'conceived', but not viewed or perceived. We call them *a priori* precisely because they have a use prior to and independently of pre-existing and intuitable instances which would adequately exemplify them. In fact, such concepts only acquire a determinable use if their object is being created for them by being defined as the logical product either of a system of axioms, or of the carrying out of some rule of procedure; as, in order to give a use to 'rational necessity', we have to lay down and define a procedure of repetitions from whose application, if carried far enough, it would in principle result. But though this would make 'ought' a concept with a non-empirical, or *a priori,* constituent, this would not make it so in the nowadays accepted sense of the intuitionist moralists. For they hold what, I think, is not only mystifying and false, but inherently self-contradictory: that 'ought' is a non-empirical, or *a priori,* concept, but not because it contains an element which is purely intelligible and determinable independently of experienced instances of it, but because it is derived from and relates to intuitable instances of something

first met in some special 'non-empirical' experience, or 'experience in a wider sense of the word'.[2] The epistemological fallacy of this view lies, I think, in the tacit assumption, characteristic of the epistemological 'realism' of this school of thought, that if a term does not denote some fact met in ordinary experience, and therefore seems non-empirical, or *a priori,* it must, if it has a use at all, denote some 'fact' met in some 'extraordinary' experience; as if there could be no concept of anything without a corresponding 'idea' of it. But, on this showing, 'ought' could not be called an *a priori* concept in the sense in which *a priori* is contrasted with *a posteriori,* i.e., what is determinable prior to experience with what is determinable only by reference to some experience; nor, in fact, need every term, in order to have a use, denote something intuitable, or completely intuitable, in some experience. That 'ought' is a non-empirical, or *a priori,* concept is agreed. That therefore it denotes the object of 'non-empirical' experience is, to say the least, a *non sequitur.*

However, at this the critic will put forward new objections. He will say this may account for the prudential, but still not for the moral 'ought'; and he may add that in the matter of distinguishing between these two the classical doctrine had been hopelessly and significantly confused. Hobbes, for example, did not hesitate to describe as moral precepts 'dictates of reason' which enjoined the civic virtues as means to the desired end of self-preservation. This pitfall, no doubt, must be avoided. But I think it can be; and it will then be seen, the principles of the classical doctrine also yield what has the form of a 'moral ought'.

We must ask here: why do we consider prudential obligations non-moral, for example, that 'I ought to save today as I want to be secure tomorrow'? Some people say, because they are derived from private good as an end; but this cannot be the point. 'I ought to save as I *ought* to care for my future' also has private good as an end, but has a 'moral' flavour; and 'I ought to save as I *want* to make national saving a success'

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[2] Ewing, *The Definition of the Good,* p. 38.

is derived from public good as an end, but feels 'non-
moral'. The fact is, we call prudential obligations non-moral
not because they are derived from private good as an end, but
from this end when it only happens to be desired; and we call
'non-moral' all obligations of this form whatever their ultimate
end. The reason is that these are obligations only in a
restricted sense: they are often inconclusive, and never obliga-
tions through and through. They are *inconclusive* when they
leave a further question open: whether, namely, they are
derived from a permissible end, i.e., not from one which
ultimately we ought not to pursue. And even when derived
from a permissible end they could still not be called obligations
through and through, for they would not in turn be derived
from an end which we ultimately ought to, but only from one
we already want to, and may, pursue. What then, by contrast,
do we call a 'moral ought'? I think, one which is *formally
conclusive* and an 'ought' *through and through*. A moral
obligation to save would be derived from another ultimate
'ought', whether from that we ought to care for our own good,
or that of others; and principally the moral problem is in the
choice of such ultimate ends, ends which, when actually they
are not desired, we still ought to pursue for their *own sakes.*
And beyond this it relates to something more: that when
ultimate ends conflict, one of them ought *absolutely* to be
pursued: that is, in the circumstances, in preference to every-
thing that otherwise ought to have been done, and regardless
of anything that otherwise ought to have been avoided. This
last feature gives to a 'moral ought' its peculiar finality.

Now, it seems evident to me, the principles of the classical
doctrine must also give rise to obligations of this form; and
this even if, as the classical doctrine implied, our particular
obligations were all derived from an ultimate concern for
private and social good. For this alone would not make them
all obligations prescribing means to what people already want.
Not everyone *capable* of concern for his own good or that of
others will therefore always *be concerned* about these ends.
Often he only would, as I said before, if he evaluated them by

distinctly envisaging them in their nature. This is why people, disposed to seek their own good, may know the better, and desire and do the worse, and why people, disposed to regard the good of others, and knowing their need, may remain indolent. They are not lacking in knowledge, but they don't imagine; they think in symbols, but they don't mentally cash their meaning. And, for them, the pursuit of their own good no less than that of others will 'intrinsically' become an obligation, using the term again for what 'reason' would 'dictate'. For, indolent though they are, it would be true of them that, if they rehearsed the thought of these ends, they would and could not but will them. Kant rightly insisted on the propriety of speaking, not only of a derivative or 'hypothetical' rational necessity for people to will ends for the sake of their desired consequences, but also of an 'unconditional' necessity to will ends for their own sakes. Kant went wrong, I think, only in claiming that the necessity for a person to will ends in themselves could be known by 'pure reason'; and that its validity was independent not only of any concern of his for some other end, but no less of his psychological capacity to feel concern for the end itself. For to say that, in reason, a person would will an end in itself is to say (as far as I can see) that the thought of it as such would *cause* him to pursue it if he mentally rehearsed it, and whether this would be so or not is a matter of psychological fact; nor is there another way for a person to elicit whether this would be so save the experimental way of testing his own responses in accordance with a principle of sufficiency, or in the plain man's language, of 'conscientiously searching his own heart'. The classical doctrine was here nearer the truth when it made 'reason' the basis of obligations to promote the good of others, or one's own, only in relation to a being with a natural disposition to attach value to these ends. Kant rejected this view in search of a basis for intrinsic obligation more certain than the limits of man's psychological constitution can provide; he was looking for universality where the classical doctrine could only offer a high order generality. But in thus founding intrinsic rational dictates on pure reason

alone he disregarded what Aristotle knew, that 'the intellect alone can move nothing'; and he made the concept of these dictates an empty form without a clue to any intelligible pro- cedure by which to give it content.

Nor, of course, should Kant have equated the notion of an 'intrinsic' with that of an 'absolute' or 'categorical' rational necessity. That someone ought to pursue some end merely considered as such does not settle whether he also can, or ought to, pursue it in the circumstances, everything considered; and the concept of an 'absolute' or 'categorical' rational neces- sity, i.e., of a 'moral ought' proper, applies to him. This concept denotes that a person would will an end and could not by reason get out of willing it if appropriate control operations were carried to their *formally complete* limits, i.e., if he also conscientiously explored the relevant circum- stances, the means towards the end, the consequences entailed by it, the alternatives to be given up for it; and, again, if he conscientiously evaluated the end not only in itself, but also comparatively, by envisaging it along with all these implica- tions. Admittedly, an 'absolute' dictate of reason in this sense will again express no more than the necessitation of a person's will by the systematic use of his powers of self- control, relative to his conative dispositions; and the judg- ments about it will again not be a product of 'pure reason': they will be neither demonstrable nor self-evident, but arrived at by factual observation and enquiry, by 'heart searchings' and by the probable inference that these processes were carried to the limit of their possible effectiveness. And some may feel this is still not enough to accord to them the name of 'moral duties'. But for this I see no reasonable grounds. Such dictates have the all-inclusive form, and, when they conflict with people's inclinations, the normative and coercive qualities we associate with a 'moral ought'. And, in fact, I cannot see for what more clinchingly prescriptive and incipiently persuasive anyone *could* be asking who wanted control over what he does. I should hold there could be nothing 'more' that would not be demonstrably something 'less'. For let someone ask for 'more'

and, for instance, say: 'It is not enough for me to know what reason would dictate me to do; I must also be assured of God's will in the matter.' There would surely be no point in his making this claim unless he thought that the will of God would, if known and considered, be a factor, and, may be, the decisive factor in determining his will. But for anyone who thought this there could be no dichotomy between an absolute dictate of his will and reason and the dictates of God. For he could not say 'reason' bade him to do an act *everything considered* before he had considered the will of God in the matter; and when he had, what would be the clinching piece of practically binding knowledge, would not just be that God willed him to do it, but that he would have to will it, given his concern for the will of God, and God willing it. In a critical and reflective being all practically relevant considerations must terminate in a decision concerning his own rational willing, everything considered. And as long as this question is considered as settled with regard to a course of action, no further question with regard to this same course of action of a practically relevant kind can, in logic, be at issue.

I conclude, then, the case for the classical doctrine is substantially sound. If all else "fails", there is some order of obligations which by their very nature and condition men are bound to incur from within themselves: they need only try to act quite at random; they will soon enough discover good enough reasons in their mental and bodily constitution and in the average conditions of social life to make it imperative for them to be temperate rather than self-indulgent, faithful rather than treacherous, sociable rather than grasping and aggressive. Sometimes, these imperatives will be "non-moral" in form: they will prescribe the adoption of means to ends which people already want and may pursue. It is an error to think that all situations inflict the full weight of a moral obligation. But sometimes they will be imperatives through and through, and they will prescribe to people the adoption of means to ends which intrinsically, and in the circumstances absolutely, they ought to pursue. The fashionable dilemma

between transcendentalism and scepticism in ethics is there-
fore unreal: it rests on the false antithesis, raised in our
time to an unchallenged and stultifying dogma, that moral
discourse is either about some esoteric moral facts, untainted
by any contact with the psychology of the human will, or
that it is about nothing at all. It seems time, in the name
of sanity, to protest against this.

Before I conclude, I must raise one further point. The
classical doctrine has also some characteristic weaknesses.
There is no space left to discuss them, but the impression
I have given would be misleading if I did not indicate what
they are. Principally, they lie in the contention that it is
transparent not only that man is cut out to live by some moral
order, but also what the content of this order must be: that
all duties have their psychological basis in one or two ultimate
dispositions; that they must be the same for all men; that
experience and reflection will easily teach us what they are.
Some of this would not follow even if we could accept the
simple psychological premisses of the classical doctrine. The
effect on social and private well-being of a great number of
our actions is notoriously hard to measure; and this must
make choices uncertain and hazardous, and dependent in some
measure on personal flair and idiosyncrasies. Nor can it be
assumed that all men are equally disposed to make the same
choice between some measure of private good and the good
of others. Any personal decision of some complexity will
illustrate this point. I need only refer to the case cited by
Sartre, in support of his negativist thesis, of the student
faced with the choice of remaining with his mother, whose
whole life is wrapped up in his, and of joining the Free French
abroad, with the incalculable chances of ever getting away
and doing any good. A case like this must be the despair of
anyone who believes that either moral problems have a plain
solution or none at all. But beyond this the situation is
more complex still. For the basic dispositions for private
and social good of the classical doctrine, even if granted, are
not the only ones to be reckoned with. There are also acquired
value-dispositions, dispositions to value or disvalue modes of

behaviour on their own account, and quite apart from their effect on social or private good; they are imparted by society, family, and early experiences. Some of these dispose to behaviour also beneficial in its effects on private or social good, as to truthfulness, justice, or faithfulness; but others also to behaviour that no longer would have these effects, or never had them, as is shown by a study of social customs, or of the neurotic trends the psychologist claims to have discovered in what he calls the "super-ego". If, then, it is a question for people to decide what they ought or ought not to do, these dispositions may be the first data for their evaluations. They may determine in the first place what, on contemplation, they would find they had to will, or could not will, and what in preference to what else. And to some extent, as these are the first data they may also be the last. The consideration of consequences, of the effects of acts on private and social good, will also play a part. But the notorious difficulties in assessing these effects, together with the difficulties involved in breaking down ingrained habits of evaluation, will often make it inevitable that people's acquired dispositions should remain preponderant in their moral decisions.

But this must seriously modify the traditional picture of the transparent rationality of the content of the moral order. Not only will even the ideally correct moral decision contain a personal element which deprives it of claims to *universality*; not only will there be serious limitations to the resolution of moral disagreement between people *differently conditioned*; but more than this, in a crucial sense men's "natural obligations" will tend to be far from "natural" to them. There is no guarantee that when men do what their given value-dispositions and the range of knowledge make it rationally imperative for them to do, they will also act "naturally" in that ultimate sense in which this term was used by the classical doctrine: that they will in fact do only what their *innate* value-dispositions would make it imperative for them to do, and what would in this sense fulfil the nature or essence of their being. An operative moral order, natural

to man in this sense, is not a fact. At best, it is a goal and a hope, at worst a mirage. We can seek to approximate to it by learning from experience; by studying and remembering the effects of actions on social and individual well-being, by developing our powers of imaginative insight and presentation, by allowing what we have learned to break the hold of ingrained habits of valuation. But we are unlikely ever to reach this goal; nor, had we reached it, would we *know* we had.

HUME'S TREATMENT OF BELIEF

By K. B. Pflaum

THE value of Hume's contribution to philosophy is by no
means a settled matter. There are people who regard Hume
as one of the greatest thinkers and there are people who look
upon him as an insincere verbal juggler. To some the *Treatise
of Human Nature* is a radiant source of inspiration, a bottom-
less pit of wisdom; to some, again, it is an annoying study of
debunking backed by bad reasoning. To illustrate this diver-
gence in attitude I shall quote the opinions of two modern
authorities on Hume. For Professor Price, Hume's *Treatise* is
one of the masterpieces of European thought and a source of
stimulus and illumination. But for Professor Prichard the
Treatise is one of the most tedious books, a book which renders
the reader not sceptical but angry. I am afraid that my view
approximates to Prichard's merciless verdict. Like Prichard
I find Hume clever. But as Prichard puts it: his "cleverness
is only that of extreme ingenuity or perversity, and the
ingenuity is only exceeded by the perversity".[1] On closer
acquaintance the novelty of his shock-tactics wears off as
quickly as powder from a woman's face and his sophistic
artistry becomes more and more transparent as one ploughs
one's way through the numerous inconsistencies scattered all
over his recorded thinking. By far the most annoying feature

[1] The quotations from and views of Professor Price, unless otherwise
stated, are to be found in his article on Hume in *Philosophy*, Volume 15
(1940). The quotations from and views of Professor Prichard are to be
found in his *Knowledge and Perception*, published recently.

in Hume is the persistent habit of taking for granted the very things he questions and allegedly disproves. He appeals to faculties, uses relations, talks about objects and selves at the very moment he denies their existence. It is exasperating to see him constantly using personal, reflexive and possessive pronouns even in statements purporting to refute the existence of mind. "I look into myself as carefully as I can and I can't find myself"—this is really what he is saying when he denies the existence of self. No wonder that one is apt to lose patience in reading Hume. And the theory of self is not the only muddle. There is a great deal of confusion in Hume: some of it mirrors genuine perplexity, some again is of Hume's own making. And I do not see any particular reason why we should sing panegyrical hymns in honour of Hume for his having either led us to an old or landed us into a new muddle—unless, of course, we agree with Professor Price that all great problems of philosophy *must* be muddles.

One of the more conspicuous and arrant pieces of dubious philosophical acrobatism in Hume is his treatment of belief. And it is the purpose of this essay to state—as far as possible —and examine the nature or rather the peculiar role of belief in Hume's philosophy.

Now some people think that Hume is great because he discovered the problem of belief and the connected problem of induction. This claim, however, apart from employing a strange criterion of greatness, is patently false. For it is obvious that Hume did *not* discover the *problem* of belief. And, what is even more striking, belief was never a problem for him—at least it was never presented by him as something that stands in need of solving. It is probably more correct to say that belief was for Hume a solution to a problem or muddle into which, by the way, he unwittingly fell. It is true that he was driven at one stage to inquire into the nature of induction and state it in the form of a problem, but he himself arrived at the conclusion that it was a pseudo-problem which could be solved only by dissolving it, or, in other words, by refusing to make it a problem.

It is my contention that Hume in his attempt to escape the uncomfortable implications of his extreme empiricism found, or thought he found, refuge in the extremely vague notion of belief. He did not realize, however, that the shelter he so timidly occupied proved in effect to be a death-bed to his bold (and boisterous) philosophy. And there is no doubt that his appeal to belief was nothing short of an admission of the impossibility—and, incidentally, a first-class refutation —of consistent and thorough-going sensible phenomenalism. It is significant that while the present-day positivists loudly acknowledge their debt to him they either conveniently refrain from mentioning his treatment of belief or dismiss it with a genial apology. Some again are generous enough to forgive him his "treachery".[2] Hume's appeal to belief is thus a glaring piece of inconsistency. And as such it stands out as a clear record of the futility of a full-blooded empiricism and a warning "to any future scepticism".

In fairness to Hume, however, it must be admitted that although he used belief as a sort of fire-escape he tried to smooth out some of the awkward obstacles that appeared in his retreat. He seemed to have been aware of the necessity of explaining his saving device and making it look proper. Hence his endeavour (half-hearted only) to discover the nature and causes of belief. It will be seen, however, that in trying to reconcile his notion of belief with the empirical philosophy to which he so strongly committed himself he ran into insurmountable difficulties. To save his phenomenalism he had to mould belief in such a way as to create the impression that it fitted in with his initial assumptions. But that was a self-defeating enterprise, as his account of belief clearly shows. He had, ultimately, to abandon the limits imposed upon himself, i.e., he had to go beyond the sphere of impressions

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[2] Cf. J. R. Weinberg, *An Examination of Logical Positivism.* "Many, if not all, of the principal doctrines of contemporary positivism derive from Hume. . . . The empiristic trend of Logical Positivism may safely be traced to Hume. . . . Nevertheless, he cannot be considered positivistic in the present sense of the term, since he seemed frequently to assume the existence of the trans-empirical world and to justify this assumption on the ground of belief. Hume's idea of belief as a method of description or explanation leads to as much metaphysics as before. . . . " (p. 3).

and ideas which he thought at first were the alpha and omega of our knowledge. And if belief was ever a problem for Hume it was only because he tried to graft on to a given body something genetically different from and alien to it.

It is time now to inquire what exactly Hume means by belief. Obviously it must have been for him, as for anybody else, a mode of experience—a mode of experience that by its nature stands pretty near knowledge. (In a way it can be described as knowing that one does not know something for certain.) Hume himself seems to distinguish three kinds of knowledge : (1) knowledge of sense-impressions and awareness of introspective data ; (2) relations of (or between) ideas, e.g., mathematical truths (these two kinds of knowledge are branded as absolutely certain ; they represent situations where contradictions are impossible) ;[3] (3) the third kind of knowledge is confined to what Hume calls matters of fact. And it is this kind of knowledge, within the domain of which are to be found experiences of selves, material objects and causal connections, that constitutes belief. It differs from the first two in that it transcends the empirically given ; it represents cases of experience which do not bear the stamp of complete certainty—i.e., cases which admit of contradictory courses.

The peculiar feature in Hume's treatment of belief is that it is confined to ideas as opposed to impressions. In other words, whenever a belief occurs we move within the sphere of ideas, or, strictly speaking, when ideas occur we entertain beliefs (and not knowledge). Now the word "idea" (which is supposed to be the key to the understanding of Hume's notion of belief) is uncomfortably ambiguous and thus instead of helping us to clarify the meaning of "belief" it contributes greatly to the difficulty of making sense out of Hume. The ambiguity of "idea" is, of course, a fertile ground for divergence of interpretations. And so for some people (notably Professor Price) it signifies a concept or universal (in a

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[3] In the section "Of scepticism with regard to reason" Hume, however, seems to reduce the logical certainty of mathematical propositions to the status of psychological certainty—Mathematical propositions (so he seems to imply in his argument) are statements of probability and nothing else.

nominalistic sense). Ideas are taken to stand for generalized images. They are what the nominalists call abstract ideas. In Professor Price's terminology they are secondary general symbols reducible to or "cashable by" primary general symbols, the latter being simply ostensive definitions. This interpretation, however, is rather far-fetched and I do not think that it truly represents Hume's conception of ideas. The more common interpretation is that which takes ideas to be mental images of impressions. And to this orthodox interpretation I subscribe. However, it probably does not matter much whether ideas are copies of impressions or image-universals, at least as far as belief is concerned. For although Hume endeavoured at first to pin belief down to ideas he finally switched over to feeling as an explanation of belief. Ideas themselves did not carry within them beliefs. Something else was required to explain our attitude to the ideas—this attitude to ideas being precisely belief. Now in so far as Hume attempted to connect his notion of belief with ideas he was free to choose one of two ways as possible alternatives. He might have made belief either (1) a separate idea, or (2) a property of ideas. The first of these ways, although inviting, has been explicitly declared by Hume to be inexplorable. He makes it clear that belief is not a distinct or separate idea superadded to other ideas and in virtue of which a simple conception acquires a status of indubitable "reality". If it were an idea distinct from other ideas it would have to be an idea of existence, but Hume openly denies the existence of such an idea. We have no abstract idea of existence distinguishable and separable from the ideas of particular objects, and consequently the difference between a simple conception and belief cannot be accounted for by positing a new idea. His argument against the existence of a separate idea of belief (existence) is given in the *Abstract* (p. 17): "It may be said that belief joins some new idea to those which we may conceive without assenting to them. But the hypothesis is false. For no such idea can be produced. When we simply conceive an object, we conceive it in all its parts.

We conceive it as it might exist, though we do not believe it
to exist. Our belief of it would discover no new qualities . . .
'Tis the very object conceived as it might exist; and when we
believe it, we can do no more." The same line of argument
is followed in the *Treatise* (p. 94),[4] where it is pointed out
that in the proposition "God is (existent)", or indeed any
other proposition stating existence, the idea of existence is
no distinct idea. When I believe God to be existent my idea
of Him neither increases nor diminishes.[5]

As a second objection to the view that belief is a separate
idea, Hume brings forward the implication of assuming the
reality (= existence) of an idea of belief. He stresses the fact
that "if belief consisted merely in a new idea, annex'd to the
conception, it would be in a man's power to believe what he
pleas'd". And this we know to be false. We can illustrate
it by an example: there are two propositions concerning
matters of fact: (1) the moon is round; (2) the moon is
square. It is obvious that we believe the first but we do not
believe the second. Now, according to Hume, our minds have
power over all our ideas. "The mind", he says, "can separate,
unite, mix and vary them as it pleases"; so if belief were
some kind of an idea ready at hand to add to any particular
idea we should be able to believe the second proposition also.
From which it follows that we could in fact believe anything
if we were only willing to supply the idea of existence—but,
in actual fact, there are propositions we do not believe. It is
perfectly true that we can imagine or fancy whatever we want,
but we are somehow prevented from believing anything we
like. Consequently there is no special idea the addition of
which would induce us to believe some things and the absence
of which would prevent us from believing others.

Two comments may be made on Hume's disposal of a
separate idea of belief. (a) He seems to think that belief is
nothing but an affirmation of existence. But it is quite clear

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[4] All quotations are from Selby-Bigge's edition.

[5] An obvious vestige of this argument is to be found in Russell's theory
of description, which purports to dispose of existence as a separate idea.

that not all beliefs refer to existence. When we believe we may think of something possessing a property which need not be that of existence. For example, when I believe that Mount Everest is the highest mountain what I affirm is the property of height as related to Mount Everest. The question of existence does not affect the accepted proposition. This is probably made even clearer in the case of relational proposition, e.g., "John loves Mary", or "Auckland is more beautiful than Wellington", when the specific relation and not the general concept of existence is affirmed.

(b) Hume rejects the possibility of an abstract idea of existence. Without invoking Plato's ideal patterns we may still argue that it is possible to form an idea of existence by comparing merely imaginary pictures, experienced in reverie or dreams, with the vivid ideas which are supposed to suggest reality. And Hume certainly distinguishes between these two classes of ideas.

Let us now consider the second way of approach, the assumption that belief is but a quality of an idea; and here we are bound to encounter considerable difficulties in explaining certain statements made by Hume in the course of his inquiry.

I do not think this interpretation is so unplausible as some people take it to be. There are some reasons to suppose that if Hume were faithful to his phenomenalism he would have had to take more seriously the view that belief is a part of the structure or life-history of an idea. I am inclined to think that if Hume kept consistently to his initial phenomenalistic position and if he was serious in explaining everything in terms of impressions and ideas, he would not have been able to escape the conclusion that each impression and each idea had some inner structure which alone would make any connection between them possible. He could have said that some kind of unanalysable and ultimate feeling or force inherent in certain ideas served as a bond or a peculiar tie between numerically and qualitatively distinct ideas. His psychical atomism would have acquired in that way some

strength, which would make it possible for him to explain some
obscure and mishandled problems. I do not mean to suggest
that Hume, having endowed the impressions and ideas with
some inner force or feeling, would have solved the perennial
difficulties appertaining to any atomic theory—after all, the
introduction of protons and electrons into modern physics,
although it saved the atomic theory from a complete collapse,
did not bring any indubitable solution: it only showed
the complexity of the problem. What I want to say is that
by assuming the existence of some feeling (even if it remained
unanalysable) within particular ideas Hume could have
avoided some grave and striking inconsistencies. Thus, for
example, everyone will be ready to admit that Hume's doctrine
of personal identity is untenable. We know that Hume flatly
denied that the self, as identical, can be known. It could be
at most believed in owing to *our* possession of "a propension
to ascribe an identity to the successive perceptions and to
suppose ourselves possessed of an invariable and uninterrupted
existence throughout our lives" (T. 253). The identity of man
is only a fictitious relation and it can only be understood
through causation, which in its turn is founded on custom.
Hume even goes so far as to reject the common view that
there is a separate and independent metaphysical entity called
soul or mind. His view is admirably summarised in the
Abstract (pp. 24, 25). "The soul", he writes, "as far as we can
conceive it, is nothing but a system or train of different percep-
tions, those of heat and cold, love and anger, thoughts and
sensations; all united together, but without any perfect
simplicity or identity. . . . It must be our several particular
perceptions that compose the mind. I say *compose* the mind,
not *belong* to it. The mind is not a substance, in which the
perceptions inhere. We have no idea of substance of any kind,
since we have no idea but what is derived from some
impression, and we have no impression of any substance either
material or spiritual. We know nothing but particular quali-
ties and perceptions." The same line of argument is to be
found in the pages of the *Treatise*, where it is stated that the

true idea of the human mind is that it is to be considered as a system of different perceptions or different existences which are connected by the relation of cause and effect (p. 261).[6]

But a little reflection will show that Hume was arguing in a circle. As Riedl rightly pointed out,[7] Hume looks for his perceiving self among his own perceptions and there is therefore no wonder that he cannot find it there. He—the seeking self—is the very self he is looking for.

A paradoxical situation then arises: the self is nothing but the belief in the self. This belief is the result of custom, which in turn is the product of the action of the mind; customs, habits, beliefs, all these presuppose the existence of mind, but Hume tries to show that mind is only a result of belief. This is an obvious example of *hysteron proteron*, and it is striking that Hume was unaware of it. It is true that

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[6] It should be observed, however, that Hume often takes for granted the existence of an identical person. Cf. *Treatise,* p. 329 : "As the immediate object of pride and humility is self or that identical person, of whose thoughts, actions and sensations we are intimately conscious." Or p. 317 : ". . . the idea, or rather impression, of ourselves is always intimately present with us". Professor H. H. Price points out rightly, I think, that Hume's "imagination" seems uncommonly like the permanent self, at least in so far as it possesses a peculiar permanency which is denied to a series of impressions and images. The imagination is supposed to make smooth the transition from item to item or, in other words, construct identity. But, as Professor Price asks, if the imagination is to make this transition smooth, must not it itself have an identity which is not constructed? (*Hume's Theory of the External World*, pp. 5 ff.). Professor Price also thinks that the word "imagination" is the keyword of Hume's whole theory of knowledge. He pushes his point so far as to suggest that Hume anticipated Kant in assigning to imagination a constructive function—Kant's Transcendental Imagination. He admits that Hume lays more stress on the supplementative functions of the imagination, whereas Kant lays more stress on the synthetic capacity. But according to him both hold that the phenomenal world (i.e., the world of material objects and empirical selves) is in some sense an imaginative construction. And he quotes one passage to show the close proximity of Hume's principle of imagination to Kant's distinction between transcendental and empirical imagination. However, Price softens considerably the shock of his discovery by pointing out that Hume certainly did not bear the distinction in mind throughout the *Treatise*. And this, he adds, is one main reason for the confusion between psychological and epistemological questions into which he frequently falls (*op. cit.,* pp. 15-17). I do not think that the passage quoted by Price warrants the extension of Hume's meaning. If one made use of isolated passages one could even prove that Descartes was a Kantian.

[7] Riedl, *Der Philosophische Kritizismus*, Bd. 1. S.199 (3 Aufl.).

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in the *Appendix*[8] he confessed his insurmountable difficulty in explaining personal identity, but this cannot be regarded as an adequate justification for committing so obvious a fallacy. Now I am inclined to think that Hume could have escaped from this fallacy if he had attempted to follow out his atomic phenomenalism to a logical conclusion. Instead of treating ideas as mere letters on a typewriter keyboard, passive and feelingless, he should have made them into qualitative and purposive entities capable of direction, varying intensities and definiteness.[9] He should have made them into permanent units capable of managing their own affairs in accordance with their inner structure. Then the burden of connection between ideas would fall on to the feeling inherent in ideas, and consequently there would arise no need for a separate mind, independent of impressions and ideas. But then, of course, the status of belief would cease to be psychological in nature; it would then acquire an ontological import. Belief could cease to be belief as we understand it. It would become a characteristic of ideas, a quality the function of which would be attracting or repelling other ideas. That development in the meaning of the term "idea", would, however, be the end of Hume's empiricism; it would mean widely opening the door to that metaphysical speculation against which—as we all know—Hume launched his violent attacks.

And yet Hume does talk sometimes of ideas as if they had an inherent felt quality. For example, in the *Appendix* (pp. 629, 631, 632) and the *Treatise* (p. 86) he suggests that

[8] *Treatise, Appendix*, p. 636: "In short there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz., that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences. Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connection among them, there would be no difficulty in the case. For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic and confess that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding."

[9] Stout was, I think, the first to draw attention to definiteness or the quantitative aspect of ideas as distinct from their presentational intensity. We may begin with a vague and indeterminate idea of something and end with one which is distinct and determinate (*Analytic Psychology,* Vol. I, p. 111). Hume failed to see that ideas may grow. But, of course, if he admitted that ideas may develop he would have had to grant them some kind of permanence. And this would completely change the nature of ideas.

they may feel more or less solid, and their force or strength should be distinguished from the agitation they produce in the mind. Again at the end of Sect. VI (p. 93) he establishes as one part of the definition of belief that "'tis an idea related to or associated with a present impression", and this is confirmed on page 96, but with an important addition, viz., "lively" (idea). This "lively" suggests the existence of feeling in an idea. (But in the preceding sentence Hume holds that it is precisely the belief which confers on our ideas an additional force and vivacity!)

However, even if ideas had within themselves a peculiar quality which demanded their acceptance they would still not be beliefs. For the liveliness or vivacity and definiteness are not, properly speaking, characteristics of beliefs. As Stout points out,[10] the intensity of beliefs, be it called assurance, conviction, firmness or fixity, is specifically different from the vividness of presentations. We may be dubious concerning ideas which possess a high degree of vivacity and definiteness and we may accept with strong conviction an idea which is rather vague.

I turn now to the last interpretation of Hume's treatment of belief, viz., that belief is a peculiar feeling or sentiment. This is by far the most common interpretation and it is supported by a vast number of statements scattered throughout the *Treatise, Enquiry* and *Abstract*. In discussing this view we should not forget that the meaning of "feeling" as understood by Hume differs widely from the present-day psychological definition. Some of the modern psychologists restrict the word "feeling" to mental states of being pleased or displeased, and it should be noted that these states are passive in that they are affections of the mind. In the sum total of the various mental states of which our experience is constituted there is always present a feeling of agreeable or disagreeable nature. It is obvious that this is not the meaning employed by Hume. With him "feeling" is of much wider denotation and appears to cover a large proportion of

10 G. F. Stout, *Analytic Psychology*, Vol. I, pp. 110, 111.

the field of consciousness, including convictions and opinions.
And it should be added that it is active at any rate in the
sense that it "renders realities more present to us than fictions,
causes them to weigh more in the thoughts, and gives them
a superior influence on the passions and imagination" (T.629).

Hume admits frankly that he is at a loss in finding
proper terms to express the true meaning of the word "belief".
We may make use of words that express something near it,
as he says in the *Appendix* (p. 629), and adds that it is a
term that everyone sufficiently understands in common life,
or as he writes in the *Abstract* (p. 19): "'Tis impossible by
words to describe this feeling which everyone must be con-
scious of in his own breast."[11] In other words he appeals to
introspection, as Berkeley did before in refuting the existence
of abstract ideas. The fact that he really feels uneasy about
the proper description of belief reveals itself in his confusing
not only the idea of belief with the manner of conceiving an
idea, but also in sometimes identifying belief with feeling
and sometimes distinguishing them. For example, in the
Abstract (p. 19) he holds that "this belief varies the manner
of conceiving, and makes a difference to the feeling or senti-
ment". Here it means that belief *causes* a difference in feeling.
This in turn suggests that feeling is preceded by belief. But
in another sentence he seems to hold that it is the feeling
which renders belief different from a loose conception
(*Abstract*, p. 19), and this would put feeling in a superior
position. In a different place again he states that belief is
nothing but a peculiar feeling, in which case there is no
relation of cause and effect between them (T.624). Hume's
vacillation between two different views is nowhere as clear
as in his treatment of the distinction between belief and bare
conception. At one stage we are told that we do not have
an idea and notice a peculiar feeling and then believe. When
we believe the feeling is different, but we do not believe because

11 Cf. Reid: "Belief, assent, conviction, are words which I do not think
admit of logical definition because the operation of mind signified by them
is perfectly simple and of its own kind. Nor do they need to be defined,
because they are common words and well understood." *Essays on the
Intellectual Powers of Man*, Essay II, Chap. 20, p. 177 (edit. Woozley, 1941).

the feeling is different. There is no transition from feeling to belief or *vice versa*. Belief *is* the manner of conceiving and not the result of it, and consequently belief is this feeling and not the result of it. Conceiving and believing are not two different fundamental psychic phenomena, but the very act of conceiving vividly or forcibly implies believing. Whatever is believed is believed through the very fact of being conceived.[12] However, as the examination of the term "manner" (as applied to conceiving) will show, Hume did in fact distinguish between merely having an idea and believing it. Now the term "manner" (of conceiving ideas), which occurs frequently in Hume's account of belief, has a certain air of ambiguity about it and unfortunately Hume never even thought of defining it. There is, however, one positive characteristic which can be deduced from the rejection of the theory that belief is a separate idea, viz., that the manner is a certain attitude taken by the mind towards its perceptions. If the mind were void of this feeling which manifests itself in taking some attitude towards ideas, the latter (ideas) would be conceived differently (if conceived at all). Indeed, we would not be aware of ideas as such because they are fluctuating entities, distinct from each other and completely separate. It is only by means of belief, so it might be said, that we come to recognize the chaotic bundle of ideas as an organized chain of human experience. Only in virtue of this peculiar feeling can we significantly use the pronoun "we", because otherwise there could be no talk of persistent and abiding selves.

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[12] Cf. William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 290. It is also interesting to note James Mill's view concerning the relation between feeling and consciousness and between feeling and belief. According to him, having a sensation and having a feeling are the same things; the sensation is simply the feeling. Furthermore, to have a feeling is to be conscious, and conversely to be conscious is to have a feeling. The same with ideas: to have an idea and the feeling of that idea are one and the same thing. Again, to feel an idea and to be conscious of that feeling are but two names for the same thing. Also, believing and being conscious of belief are not different things. (Cf. *Analysis of the Human Mind*, I, 170-172.)

Both Brentano and Stout offer some valid arguments against identifying simple apprehensions with belief. (Cf. Stout: *Analytic Psychology*, Vol. I, Ch. V; and Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*, Band I, Buch I, Cap. 7.)

As we said, the *manner* of conceiving particular objects is precisely the belief or some specific sentiment of the mind. Now this feeling is the only arbiter in ascribing "reality" to ideas; it is an expression of the difference holding between reality and fiction. Where it is present, there we say we are faced with reality or existence. Where it is absent, we say there is no reality but mere fiction.

(The problem of establishing reality of ideas, and of the discrimination between ideas which can claim the status of reality and those which are only fantastical, has been dealt with by Locke, who offers us at the end of Book II of his *Essay* a chapter devoted to the distinction between real and fantastical ideas. The ground of this distinction lay, according to Locke, in the conformity or non-conformity of an idea to an archetype. The real idea was one which was conformable to its archetype; in Locke's language it had a foundation in nature. The fantastical, on the other hand, had no conformity with that reality of being to which it was "tacitly referred as to its archetype". It is easy to see that Locke's solution of the problem was in agreement with the representative theory of perception of which he was a more or less faithful follower. Accordingly all the points of criticism which can be brought against this theory can be applied to Locke's distinction between real and fantastical ideas. But it is not my aim to dwell upon Locke's theory of knowledge. What I want to stress is the fact that Hume was trying to avoid the difficulties appertaining to the representative theory of perception and accordingly he had to look for some other means of getting out of the difficulty of finding an adequate criterion of reality for ideas.)

Hume's position is briefly as follows: there are impressions and ideas; impressions have a high degree of force and vivacity and, if they occur, the conviction coefficient, as Laird calls the feeling which accompanies them, is at its maximum. Furthermore there is, so to say, a bare conception. Besides, there is the belief which "makes some difference betwixt the conception to which we assent, and that to which we do not

assent" (*Abstract*, p. 17). In other words, the bare ideas are sometimes enlivened while they are being conceived by the peculiar and specific manner[13] which, although it implies conception, is yet, as Hume states, something more. It is a feeling which he endeavours to explain by calling it "a superior force, or vivacity, or solidity, or firmness, or steadiness".

In the case of actual sense impressions and impressions repeated in the memory (T., p. 86) there is no difficulty in showing their reality. They just strike upon the mind in a way which carries with it complete certainty. But it is different in the case of unobserved matters of fact; we can have assurance of their reality only if they are causally related, either immediately, or mediately through a series of causal relations, to a sense impression. It is a fundamental tenet of Hume that no matter of fact can be proved but from its cause or effect. "Nothing can be known to be the cause of another but by experience." We can give no reason for extending to the future our experience in the past; but we are entirely determined by custom, when we conceive an effect to follow from its usual cause.[14] Our so-called inferences from experience are not of a rational nature; they are not cognitive but *habitual* or sensitive. Let me illustrate this by Hume's own example: I see a fire and feel heat; the next time when I see fire I may think of heat, but perhaps I do not feel compelled to believe that the fire is hot. But after many similar instances of fire and heat being conjoined there is formed a natural and inevitable transition in my mind from the fire to the idea of heat—that is, whenever I see a fire I

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[13] It has been argued that although the phrase "manner of conceiving" suggests activity it is nevertheless passive. This contention is supported by Hume's insistence upon the fact that feeling does not depend on our will, as all ideas do. This conceiving, then, is not a rational process voluntarily carried out, and, strictly speaking, we should say that it is something done to us over against which we are passive. But I am not altogether sure whether this is really what Hume meant. He frequently repeats that this feeling is an act and that it does something to ideas and alters them, giving them a peculiar shade of reality. I feel inclined to agree with William James (*Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 295) in calling it active.

[14] Cf. *Abstract*, p. 19. It should be pointed out that the problem really arises about all transition from the observed to the unobserved, not merely about the future.

expect heat and believe that the fire will be hot. This belief
is just the peculiar feeling which appears whenever there is
an impression of fire, and which is brought to life solely
as a result of custom. In this way alone can the mind reach
the steady and strong conception of an object *not* present to
the senses. (If it is present to the senses the impression will
have intrinsic vivacity.)

Besides the relation of cause and effect there are two
other principles of association, viz., resemblance and con-
tiguity in time and space, which have some influence upon the
forming of belief. Hume gives numerous examples which
show that an idea associated according to resemblance and
contiguity with a present impression is strengthened, made
more steady, more vivid, etc. But these two principles have
no right to make us believe in the existence of unobserved
matters of fact. In the case of their presence the mind is not
determined by and confined to one idea—that is, we might say
there is no fixity, no manner of necessity for the mind to
conceive any resembling or contiguous object (when the
stimulus-object is presented). This is where the all-embracing
nature of the causal association appears, for where it operates
the mind is determined to assent to an idea as manifesting
"reality". This suggests a naturalistic explanation of belief.
Whenever there is a causal relation our minds do believe in
the ideas related to the present impression. Now the causal
relation is based upon custom, which operates upon us irrespec-
tive of our will. Constant conjunction between certain impres-
sions and between the corresponding ideas gradually forms a
channel within which all our experience of reality must run.
This channel is nothing else but habit, in accordance with
which our inferences are formed. We cannot help judging.
Nature, as Hume says, by an absolute and uncontrollable
necessity has determined us to judge (= believe) as well as
to breathe and feel (T. 183).[15] "All these operations are a

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[15] It is important to note that Hume was not aware of the distinction
between "judgment" and "belief". Not all judgments are beliefs. We
sometimes accept or state a proposition without believing it. "Judgment"
is a wider category, and it may even comprise disbeliefs and doubts.

species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able either to produce or to prevent" (*Enquiry,* pp. 46, 47).

Human nature is so constructed that by means of beliefs we are carried beyond the immediately experienced impressions to objects and events which we do not actually perceive; and even more: the belief forces us to envisage an independently existing world distinct from the momentary impressions and ideas.

But there arises immediately a question concerning the truth-value of beliefs. Have we any grounds for distinguishing between true and false, or at least wise and foolish beliefs? It appears from Hume's account that beliefs are strictly neutral affairs that defy any attempts at evaluation. This view, however, is riddled with difficulties. First of all—and this is a general point—it shares in the folly of all relativistic theories. If beliefs are merely a question of an irrevocable Überzeugungsgefühl, if they are implanted in us by nature, then any claim to veracious or even pragmatical superiority and any preference would be ridiculous, if possible at all; for, *ex vi termini,* they are all of equal value and validity. And, looking at them from logical heights, they would be participants in a vast joke in which contradictories would thrive and flourish. For, on that view, all beliefs are equally well founded and justified. Now it seems obvious that beliefs, to be beliefs at all, must be capable of being either true or false. (And, indeed, it might be pointed out, they differ precisely in that respect from knowledge, which is beyond truth or falsity.) As Professor Price rightly points out: If I believe p, the question "Is p true or false?" must make sense. "It must be logically possible that this question should be asked, even if it be psychologically impossible for human beings to ask it, having the particular psychological constitution which human beings happen to have. For otherwise p would not be *believable* at all. If anyone believed something which it was logically impossible to question, he simply would not be believing. Likewise, if it is psychologically impossible for human beings

to ask a certain question, it follows from this very fact that the question itself makes sense. If it did not, the psychological weakness which prevents us from asking it would not be a genuine incapacity. To be unable to do something logically impossible is not an incapacity at all; just as it is not a physical weakness to be unable to jump from here to the middle of last week."[16]

The difficulty we are faced with next is the peculiar status of custom. According to Hume our causal inferences are simply transitions within the imagination—transitions which generate belief. This comes about through the carrying over of the strength and vivacity of the present impression to the idea of its habitual attendant or concomitant, so that the latter is enlivened. And we are told that the ultimate responsibility for this falls on custom. But it is commonplace that not all habits are good habits. Some of our customs (as Hume would admit himself—e.g., *Treatise,* Part IV, Sect. 4), acquired by means of education and propaganda, for instance, may be subjected to careful scrutiny and eliminated. The point is that we do not allow customs or habits to reign unreservedly; we check them again and again, retain some and reject others. But in doing that we oppose custom, we go against "nature". We select, and it seems that our activity of selecting curtails the rule of custom to an appreciable degree. In other words, habit is not the only determining factor in belief. Has Hume anything to say on that point? Not much. His reply seems to be that we can have assurance of the existence of unobserved matters of fact only if they are causally related (immediately or mediately) to present impressions. That is a different statement from the following one, viz., that "the only transitions in the mind which generate beliefs are transitions according to causal association". He admits that this associative principle (i.e., the causal principle) is not the only one which has power to enliven ideas. But only in the case of causal association, according to Hume, ought the mind to feel bound down to an idea. Only in this case does the idea get

16 *Hume's Theory of the External World,* p. 12.

sufficient liveliness, steadiness, etc. But Hume never attempts to ascertain the degree of liveliness which is sufficient to constitute a belief. (As a matter of fact Hume had failed to see that beliefs vary in degree. If he had seen it he might have come to the conclusion that every idea is believed in some degree.) Now if beliefs are to be true or false it would seem that there must be more than the mere enlivening of ideas. This "more", according to Hume, is a propensity to go beyond the immediately experienced to independent existences and causality in the external world. This propensity is something ultimate and natural. We are simply forced by the all-powerful nature to believe in things which our reason proves to be non-existent.

It appears that this mode of explanation offers us another case of *circulus in probando*. Belief is generated by causal association, but the causal association is *believed* to operate throughout our lives. The causal relation cannot be known. It is itself only an object of belief, and this is what we must take as ultimate. It is therefore of no use to argue from causation to belief, because the latter presupposes the former.

I propose now to leave aside all the difficulties appertaining to Hume's presentationism, forget for a while about the confusing language of impressions and ideas, forgive him his verbal and logical inconsistencies, and consider shortly the main points of his theory. These are: (1) belief is sensitive or affective and not cognitive; (2) belief is involuntary. To a brief examination of these points I shall proceed now. As we saw, it is a fundamental tenet of Hume that belief is thoroughly non-rational, that it is a matter of feeling and not of the intellectual (or cognitive) part of our nature. This feeling can be said to be under the direct control of nature and it is related to the latter in a sense in which a slave is related to his master—i.e., it stands to it in the relation of complete obedience. Now, if belief is nothing but a feeling, we *have* to believe what nature wants us to believe; that is, we have simply no choice or, in other words, there is nothing voluntary in our assent. This, however, does not seem to be true; the fact is that we are capable of refusing, and we

actually very often refuse, to believe that something is so
and so. For instance, as J. S. Mill pointed out, we all refuse
to believe that what we see through a telescope is nearer than
the same thing seen by the naked eye. We seem to ignore the
evidence of the senses and prefer to believe what reason tells
us about the distance; we are, so to say, confronted with two
alternatives: (1) the "something" is near, and (2) the "some-
thing" is, in fact, further away, and we adopt that one which
our reason finds to be more probable. (Besides, it should be
pointed out that our senses may in certain cases be controlled
by us. We seem to possess some freedom in choosing the
"objects" of perception; it lies in our power whether to open
our eyes or not, whether to touch an object or not, and we can
choose in which direction we shall look or how to touch an
object. Sometimes, by purposely diverting our attention, we
can command our organic sensations—for example, we can
forget about our stomach pain by playing a hazardous game
of cards, etc.)

Again, on Hume's view there should really be no room
in human minds for doubting or for the state of suspended
judgment. For if nature dictates to us beliefs which we cannot
refuse to accept, the possibility of doubting is completely
eliminated. And it is no use to argue that doubting is an
activity of the fool, something that should be avoided. As
Hume himself proved by his whole philosophy, not only is it
impossible to refrain from doubting but, if we are to take
Hume seriously, it is to be regarded as a highly commendable
activity. After all, Hume's philosophy is nothing but a glori-
fication of doubt pushed to the furthest point of possibility.
Now if we ask ourselves where doubt comes from the only
answer available is that it springs from nature. Nature will
thus be responsible for both believing and doubting. And
what will make us experience the one rather than the other?
Nature again? Somehow we find ourselves in a muddle from
which there appears to be no way out.

Hume's treatment of belief suffers from over-simplification
and parochial one-sidedness. In trying to reduce belief to

one element, viz., feeling, he completely overlooked the obvious complexity of the mental state of believing. It is difficult to see how he could have ignored the volitional element and discarded the intellectual (or rational) constituent in belief. It must be evident, even to the unsophisticated mind, that belief is not exclusively a matter of feeling, that belief contains within itself an act of assenting, an act which combines the volitional and cognitive elements. Believing is a meeting-place of an intellectual awareness of alternatives, comparison of various items of evidence, estimating the value of the available evidence and the readiness to assent to one of the possible alternatives. The feeling of conviction which is either a concomitant or resultant of the formation of belief is only one of the elements in belief—an important but not the only one. Even McDougall, who puts beliefs into the class of "derived emotions" (i.e., says that they are essentially feelings), admits that they must be put on the intellectual plane.[17] It may be concluded then that Hume's account of belief, which reduces belief to a feeling (guaranteed by the tireless nature), is inadequate and unsatisfactory. A complete theory of belief must take into consideration the intellectual and volitional as well as the affective elements.

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[17] *An Outline of Psychology*, Ch. **XIV**.

CRITICAL NOTICE

LOGIC AND THE BASIS OF ETHICS. By Arthur N. Prior. (Oxford
University Press, 1949. xi + 111 pp.) Price (U.K.), 8s. 6d.

THE scope of this book is not so wide as its title might
suggest. Prior has deliberately restricted himself to a single
issue, the dispute between "naturalists" and "anti-naturalists"
in ethics (in the sense referred to in Moore's discussion of the
"naturalistic fallacy"), and has further restricted himself to
the mere clarification of that issue. On the first page of his
Introduction he admits that he is an anti-naturalist, but as
the book proceeds his own position is not developed but only
indicated. He claims to "consider the issue purely as a
logician, and to suggest to both sides how their positions may
be freed from logical faults" (pp. vii-viii). One of the main
points he tries to establish, in fact, is that the issue cannot
be settled either way by logic alone. Now I should suggest
that Prior has been too cautious, that he has kept his dis-
cussion within limits so narrow that they cramp its proper
development—in effect, that one cannot fully clarify such an
issue as this without some examination of the facts of the case.

Prior begins by examining Moore's discussion (in *Prin-
cipia Ethica*) of the "naturalistic fallacy". He explains that
Moore means by this "the assumption that because some
quality or combination of qualities invariably and necessarily
accompanies the quality of goodness . . . this quality or com-
bination of qualities is identical with goodness"—for example,
the argument that the pleasant and the good are and must be
coextensive, and therefore that goodness is the same quality
as pleasantness. Moore shows that this is a fallacy by pointing
out that if goodness and pleasantness were the same quality
it would be an empty tautology to say that what is pleasant
is good, whereas if the two qualities were coextensive this
would be a significant statement.

Prior accepts this part of Moore's argument, and likewise his argument that goodness is a simple quality, since any attempt to analyse it into some combination of simpler qualities can be seen to involve significant statements and not mere truisms. But he says that Moore's further contention that goodness is unique lacks precision: any quality at all is unique in the only sense that Moore could defend. But, he says, what Moore is getting at is that goodness is non-natural; that is, we can see that all qualities other than goodness and badness have something positive in common which goodness and badness have not. Moore, then, like any other "anti-naturalist", is asserting that the distinction drawn by Aristotle between the ethical and the natural fields of enquiry is a real one.

Now Prior points out that *this* conclusion does not follow from the uniqueness of goodness in the only sense which Moore could defend, or from Butler's principle that "everything is what it is and not another thing". In fact, the showing up of the naturalistic fallacy does not refute naturalism (which would be the denial of the above-mentioned distinction). It does, however, refute a widespread inconsistent naturalism, the view of the man who tries to have it both ways, for example both to regard "what is pleasant is good" as a significant assertion and to support this by saying that goodness means pleasantness.

Prior goes on to indicate what is required for consistent naturalism: a consistent naturalist would admit that the statement, say, that pleasure and nothing but pleasure is good is, for him, a mere truism; he would deny that there is any non-natural quality that might be called goodness; and he would explain the belief in such a quality as a confusion arising from the fact that present usage calls good a number of different things (for example, what is pleasant, what someone commands, what promotes survival, etc.) and that we falsely imagine that these things have a common quality.

Prior points out, quite correctly, that whether there is a common quality or not is a genuine philosophical question, and that therapeutic positivism (the attempt to clear up such

a confusion by analysis) cannot replace the investigation of this question. But (in pursuit of his limited purpose) he does not investigate this question, or even discuss how it would be investigated, except to say that the principle used to investigate it will depend on our general philosophical position.

He says less about a consistent non-naturalism at this stage; but he suggests that it would include a significant statement about what sort of thing is good, but would admit that this statement is not certain, that its denial is not self-contradictory, and "a significant non-naturalism . . . must comprise more than mere freedom from the 'naturalistic fallacy'" (p. 12).

Now I think that Prior establishes his main point in this section, that the exposure of the "naturalistic fallacy" refutes not naturalism itself but only inconsistent naturalism. But his account of consistent naturalism is misleading, unless we note that what he is here presenting is one of the alternatives open to the former inconsistent naturalist, who has now seen the light. There are, of course, other possible consistent naturalisms. For example, one might insist on the naturalness of goodness without identifying it with any *other* natural quality, such as pleasantness. Such a view has not been very commonly held, but Prior must be aware that it is held, for example, by Professor Anderson, with whom he has been engaged in controversy in this journal. This may seem to be a very minor point, but it has this importance: by ignoring this possibility Prior has in effect identified the issue between naturalism and non-naturalism with that between reductionism and non-reductionism; he has suggested that a naturalistic view is necessarily a reductionist one, and this does not help to clarify the issue.

In the other studies, Prior shows how the fallacy which Moore criticises has repeatedly appeared and been criticised in ethical discussions from the seventeenth century onwards. Even Moore's mistakes have been anticipated. Cudworth, for example, in criticising Hobbes and others, argues that moral good and evil cannot be constituted by the will of a ruler, simply because everything is what it is by nature, and this,

Prior says, is equivalent to Moore's mistaken belief that he has refuted naturalism in general. Prior insists that Hobbes could consistently have held the view which Cudworth only mentions in parenthesis, that "moral good and evil . . . [are] mere names without any signification, or names for nothing else, but willed and commanded". But, he says, Cudworth also had a valid argument against inconsistent ethical naturalism (that is, against a part of Hobbes's position), namely, that an ethical conclusion cannot validly be deduced from entirely non-ethical premisses, and that a contract, therefore, will produce an obligation only if there is a prior obligation to keep one's contracts.

Prior goes on to deal with this more general form of the fallacy, the attempt to deduce the ethical from the non-ethical. He shows how Samuel Clarke and Bishop Butler, in trying to deduce what is right from "the nature of things" or from "human nature", in effect surreptitiously insert the required ethical assertions into the "nature" in question, and he ascribes a similar fallacy to Cudworth. Then he traces the exposure of these fallacies by Hutcheson and Hume, and the rehabilitation of the rationalist position by Reid, on the new basis that ethical precepts are discoverable by reason though not all of them are capable of proof.

Prior takes Sidgwick as a moral philosopher who re-asserted, in a particularly clear way, the point that what ought to be cannot validly be derived solely from what is. He quotes with approval Sidgwick's view that ethics and politics are normative sciences, "distinguished from all positive sciences by having as their special and primary object to determine what ought to be" (p. 36).

Prior is saying, then, that the distinction between positive and normative sciences is one form (if not the only form) of consistent non-naturalism. It seems, indeed, from a good many of his examples, that the "fallacy" whose history he is tracing is precisely the failure to distinguish sharply between the two copulas, "is" and "ought to be". This, for example, is the point made by Hume in the passage (quoted on p. 33) where he says that " 'ought' expresses some new relation . . .

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[which] should be observed and explained". But this is a different point from the one discussed in connection with Cudworth (p. 20), that a valid syllogism can have no term in the conclusion which does not occur in the premisses. Now I think that for a thorough clarification of the "naturalistic fallacy" it would be necessary to make this distinction, and to bring out the fact that non-naturalism is really a doctrine of a special ethical copula, though this is concealed, of course, in Moore's formulation. This is what would distinguish non-naturalism from Anderson's non-reductive naturalism. Prior's failure to bring this out is connected with his unwillingness (on p. 6) to discuss in detail the distinction between natural and non-natural qualities, for such a discussion would show that ethical qualities, as asserted by the anti-naturalist, are non-natural because they in some way include or imply this special copula: "X is good" means that "X ought to be" or that "X ought to be pursued", and implies that the indispensable and available means to X "ought to be chosen".

But is this doctrine of the two copulas a consistent view, or can it be criticised by one who "considers the issue purely as a logician"? Now Hume, in the passage mentioned, says that this "new relation . . . should be . . . explained", that is, we may ask for some account of the peculiar copula "ought to be". The anti-naturalist may reply, of course, that this is unanalysable and unexplainable, and that we are all acquainted with it anyway. But ethical naturalism, I think, is often based upon or supported by an unwillingness to accept this special copula, and this point would therefore have to be brought out in any full clarification of the issue between naturalists and their opponents.

Leaving this point aside, we may suggest that one thing a logician might consider is syllogistic reasoning. Now how does a normative premiss enter into a syllogism? If we argue,

> All promises ought to be kept
> This is a promise
> Therefore this ought to be kept,

we are clearly not treating the major premiss and the conclusion as having the special copula: we are putting the

"ought to be" into the major term and introducing a normal copula ("are" and "is") in order to construct the syllogism. Prior seems to admit this, since he either gives the syllogism with "good" as the ethical term and with a normal copula (p. 20) or states it as a mixed hypothetical, with the "ought to be" in the apodosis of the hypothetical major premiss, and therefore with an ordinary non-ethical copula involved in the relation between protasis and apodosis (p. 41). In other words, there is at least a logical difficulty in holding both that ethical propositions are normative and that we can reason about ethical matters along with "natural" ones. When we formulate the reasoning, we seem to abandon the special copula and treat the ethical element simply as a term or terms.

And if we turn from syllogistic reasoning to what people mean, do we find any consistent ethical non-naturalists of this sort? Do we find anyone who regards those propositions which it is "the special and primary object" of ethics to discover as being purely normative, wholly concerned with what ought to be? Does not every anti-naturalist think that some things *are* good, as well as thinking that they *ought to be* pursued? Does Sidgwick, for example, think of happiness only as what ought to be aimed at, and not also as good in a qualitative sense? In other words, does not the believer in normative sciences actually hold that these are *also* positive sciences? And this does not seem to be a consistent view.

Prior also seems to go astray in following Sidgwick in his discussion of Kant's distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives. Sidgwick argues that "if you wish to be healthy you ought to rise early" is not simply equivalent to "early rising is an indispensable condition of the attainment of health". The word "ought" also implies that it is "unreasonable" to adopt an end but not to adopt the indispensable means to it. Prior thus reduces the hypothetical to the categorical imperative, taking it to mean "if you desire X more than you are averse to doing Y, and doing Y is the only way to obtain X, you ought to do Y" (p. 41). The real distinction, he says, is between the categorical imperative (including the hypothetical as thus interpreted) and the

purely causal assertion "if you do not do Y, you will not get what you want" (p. 42), and he adds that if this was the distinction Kant really meant, he described it very loosely.

Now this was not, of course, the distinction Kant intended to make. He was concerned to distinguish between the very things that Sidgwick and Prior are concerned to identify, the moral rules and the prudential ones (including in these what Kant calls rules of skill). Kant was aware that the hypothetical imperative makes more than a causal assertion: he says that "who wills the end, wills (so far as reason has decisive influence on his actions) also the means which are indispensably necessary and in his power" (pp. 84-85 in Paton's edition of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*)—a passage which Sidgwick, as quoted by Prior, seems to be paraphrasing. But Kant is arguing that this is a different sort of rationality from that involved in the adoption of a moral principle.

To make the position clear, let us consider some well known forms of "ethical" argument (cf. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language,* Ch. V). One is "you want X, Y is the indispensable means to X, therefore you ought to do Y". Another is "you would like to do A, but you admit that it would be disastrous if everyone acted on the same principle, therefore you ought not to do A". Now in neither of these is the "reasoning" deductive (or even inductive), but popular usage does sometimes describe people as rational when they are willing to listen to arguments of each of these forms, and irrational when they are not. But while the "rationality" in each of these cases is not concerned with logical reasoning, there are *two* kinds of non-logical "rationality" involved. Now Kant is insisting on the distinction between these two kinds: the former argument is merely prudential, the latter only, he would maintain, is moral. And Kant seems to be perfectly right in saying that there is a distinction, that two kinds of "ought" are involved, and Prior is wrong in treating the former merely as a special case of the latter, the moral, "ought". (Of course, what Kant was immediately criticising

was the inverse of Prior's view, the attempt to treat the moral "ought" as a special case of the prudential one.)

In his fifth study Prior criticises the attempt (made, for example, by Carritt) to deduce the obligation to keep promises from the fact that making a promise is an assertion that we have an obligation, and shows that Carritt's translation of "I promise" as "I hereby place myself under an obligation" leads to a vicious infinite regress.

In his next three studies he examines various forms of "the view that there is some special analogy or even identity between wrongness in action and falsehood or self-contradiction in theory". He examines, for example, Hume's criticism of Wollaston's attempt to reduce wrong-doing to falsehood; the criticism turns on the point that in order to work out his view Wollaston has to assume the very moral principle that he is trying to reduce to something else. Prior also examines in Hume and Adam Smith the confusion between the views (a) that a moral judgment *is* a feeling and (b) that a moral judgment *asserts* that someone has or would have a certain feeling. Similarly he criticises Popper's view that while "norms" are not facts, they may still be "valid". Here Prior argues that the notion of a norm's being valid can be defended only in terms of ethical rationalism, only by identifying a norm with the fact that something ought to be done, so that Popper's view "does not 'explain' obligation, but presupposes it" (p. 76).

Now Prior's criticism of Popper is, I think, sound, but why does Popper adopt such an unsatisfactory view? And is there not a remarkable resemblance between Popper's view of norms and Sidgwick's account of normative sciences? Sidgwick actually speaks, in a passage Prior quotes on p. 37, of "judgments respecting conduct" being "valid". Surely both Popper and Sidgwick "want to have it both ways", that ethical precepts both are and are not facts, and their choice of the word "valid", which suggests "true" but doesn't quite say it, reflects their indecision. And then the reason why Popper adopts this unsound view is that he realizes that an ethical statement somehow includes or implies a command, and yet

that it is not simply a command. Now this sort of difficulty lies at the very root of the issue Prior is setting out to clarify, and yet he does not tackle it.

Prior criticises Findlay's "conventional" view of morals, his attempt to find the truth of moral sentiments in the concurrence of all reflective persons in those sentiments, and argues, quite rightly, that truth is something more than the power to command general assent. Prior also succeeds, I think, in pinning the "naturalistic fallacy" on Findlay, since Findlay wants to treat "the *orbis terrarum* judges securely in moral matters" both as a tautology and as a significant statement.

In his final study, Prior traces the history of the refutation of the "naturalistic fallacy", showing that even Moore's special method of exposing this fallacy, the "argument from trivialization", has been anticipated by many earlier thinkers.

Prior seems to succeed in establishing most of his detailed points; that is, he successfully analyses and exposes the confusions in the views he has examined. And the brief survey I have given does far less than justice to the accuracy and detail of his examination of these views and to the interesting way in which he draws parallels between thinkers of various periods.

Nevertheless, as has already been suggested, Prior fails in some important ways to clarify the issue between naturalists and their opponents. One question that he merely hints at is, "why are these inconsistent views (on both sides) so widespread? Why (in Prior's words, p. x) do such 'thick growths of sophistry . . . thrive on the soil of Moral Philosophy'?" Of course, if he discussed this question he would not be speaking "merely as a logician". Now one obvious, but I think insufficient answer to this question is that the sophistries have been introduced in the attempt to get a quick decision of ethical questions, to construct a short, neat, and convincing proof of one's basic doctrine. Another answer, which contains rather more of the truth, is that the inconsistent views have been popular because the consistent ones are so unattractive

—particularly if the "consistent" alternatives that presented themselves were the ones that Prior suggests.

I have already mentioned several reasons for doubting whether non-naturalism *can* ever be consistent. But apart from these, it seems clear that the type of non-naturalism of which Prior approves (and which he presumably supports) is a pretty desperate view. Is not Reid's doctrine, for example, obviously a last-ditch defence of rationalism? The syllogism by which Prior expresses Reid's reasoning (on p. 35),

> "Not all ethical precepts are capable of proof;
> But all ethical precepts are discoverable by reason;
> Therefore, not all things discoverable by reason are capable of proof"

is of course *logically* valid; but *historically* it could only be the obstinate rejoinder of a school which had started out by claiming that ethical precepts were rational in the sense of being capable of proof, and which had been unable to defend this claim. Again, rationalists of this type are inevitably at a loss when challenged to give an account of the way in which reason discovers ethical precepts, or to explain why the faculty that makes these discoveries should be called "reason". And when they are thus challenged they will be sorely tempted to fall back on the fallacy of trying to deduce the ethical from the non-ethical.

And what Prior offers as consistent naturalism is at least as unattractive. Since this is a reductionist view, it amounts to an abandonment of ethical terms, or to their use merely as a shorthand for some complex non-ethical terms. Now I doubt whether anyone in ordinary life—that is, when he is not deliberately maintaining a philosophical view—can either use ethical terms in this way or do without them. (As an ethical naturalist of a sort, I can speak from experience.) Now this explains the curious point that Prior mentions but does not explain, that Moore thinks he has refuted naturalism in general. Moore, like Cudworth in the parallel argument mentioned above, thought that this alternative was too unattractive for the naturalist to take. And Moore and Cudworth

may well have been right in their judgment of the opponents
they had in mind: a man who starts by saying that the good
is pleasure, or what conduces to biological survival, or what
God or the sovereign commands, will not be willing con-
sistently to regard this statement as a truism. Moore's argu-
ment, then, taken historically or psychologically rather than
merely logically, is really a way of bringing out the fact that
anyone who uses ethical terms uses them sometimes or in part
non-naturally. (That Moore intends his argument to be so
taken is clear from his insistence on the "experiment" of
considering "what is before one's mind", for example on page
16 of *Principia Ethica*.)

What I am arguing, of course, is that (as I suggested in
this journal some years ago) ethical terms in ordinary usage
have inconsistencies deeply rooted in them—trickier ones than
those suggested in the rather lame explaining away of ethical
qualities that Prior offers to the consistent naturalist—and
that Prior's "consistent naturalism" and "consistent non-
naturalism" do not really get over the fundamental difficulties,
and further that without bringing out these difficulties we
cannot understand why the thinkers whose work Prior
examines argued (and went astray) as they did.

Now it is perhaps unfair to criticise a very short book,
packed with valuable material as this one is, for not raising
certain further issues. But I feel that this criticism is neces-
sary, because as it stands Prior's book points to the false
conclusion that when logic has done all it can the ethical
enquirer has still a free choice between naturalism and non-
naturalism. Of course, Prior only claims to have clarified a
single ethical issue; but I think he has only partly clarified it.
He has not shown how the confusions arise, or brought out
the difficulties in the views he regards as consistent. And he
has not distinguished the question of naturalism from that
of reductionism, or (what comes to the same thing) the
question whether there is a special ethical copula from the
question whether there are distinct ethical qualities.

JOHN MACKIE.

REVIEWS

THE ESSENTIALS OF THEISM. By D. J. B. Hawkins. (Sheed and Ward, 1949. 151 pp.) Price (U.K.), 7s. 6d.

"The philosopher who thinks about God", writes Fr. Hawkins, "is not offering an entirely new foundation for religious belief, but is analysing and judging an existent process of reasoning" (p. 11). Christians are wisely reluctant to renounce the grounds for belief which convinced the Saints and Doctors of the Church. They do not claim that there are no flaws in the proofs elaborated by this doctor or that. Faith derives, not from such explicit reasonings, but from deeper, implicit rational processes, which it is the endeavour of natural theology to develop into genuine proofs. In this, Fr. Hawkins holds, the traditional cosmological proofs, as found in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, very largely succeeded. Accordingly, he devotes a considerable part of his little book to the critical elaboration of St. Thomas's thought.

Following St. Thomas, Fr. Hawkins begins with the deliverances of common sense: human beings and the physical universe exist. But, he argues, in the chapters entitled "The Contingency of History", "The Inadequacy of Materialism", and "The Causal Argument", the existence of neither is "intelligible" unless we suppose something else to exist: "if anything exists, a necessary being must exist"; nothing directly known to common sense is a necessary being; therefore a necessary being must exist, other than the beings directly known to common sense. Must such a necessary being be identical with the God of Christian belief? "A necessary being can only be infinite being" (p. 64); Kant was mistaken in supposing this proposition to be the same as the proposition maintained by the ontological proof (pp. 69-73); infinite being can only be eternal mind: "hence there exists an infinite and eternal mind, which is God" (p. 90). Can we describe God more fully than this? Only by *analogy*. "The being of finite things is proportionate to their essences as the being of God is proportionate to his infinite essence. . . . We know that all the positive perfections of being belong to God in their fullest form, but we have only finite perfections from which to argue. However much we strip away every element of imperfection that we can discern, we do not arrive at a positive conception of the infinite mode in which

God possesses these perfections, and must be content with a residual imprecision" (p. 92). Analogy is extensively used in the subsequent chapters—"Creation", "God the Lawgiver", "God and Free-Will", and "God and Evil". In the final chapter, natural and revealed theology are discriminated. "A philosophical theory of the existence and nature of God needs to be completed by an historical study of the way in which God communicates himself to man. This is theology in the strict sense . . . " (p. 149).

Fr. Hawkins's proof that God exists clearly rests on the principle that "if anything exists, a necessary being must exist". Some Thomist philosophers, among them Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, have maintained that this principle is self-evident, and provable, if at all, only by a *reductio ad absurdum* of its contradictory. I do not think that Fr. Hawkins would question Garrigou-Lagrange's positive contention, but he does appear to differ from him in holding that the principle can be derived from a consideration of ordinary causation. His argument, given in the chapter "The Contingency of History", is this. Theories that "change is primarily real" are all inconsistent (p. 20), and the only alternative to them is an interpretation of becoming "in terms of being", for which we require " a notion of causation in the sense of a temporal relation of antecedent and consequent" (p. 21). "Once provided with the notion of causality, we can look for instances of it where the immediate insight is not available, and we can recognize in general that whatever begins to exist must have its origin in something already existent . . . this conception of temporal causation is a primary acknowledgment of reason" (p. 24). Now "whatever begins to be, or ceases to be, is contingent and exists as the effect of something else. Hence the process of history is a field of contingency, and we rightly seek to explain what comes to be by what has preceded it" (p. 30). Ultimately, however, to explain one contingent being by deriving it from another will not do: "we must . . . look to something which neither begins nor ceases to be, for an explanation of those things which begin and cease to be" (p. 30). The conception of causation as a temporal relation is therefore inadequate: "the quest of intelligibility compels us by the very force of reason to transcend it" (pp. 33-34).

I must confess at once that even if "the conception of temporal causation is a primary acknowledgment of reason", I do not think there is the slightest reason to suppose that, for an explanation of whatever is temporally caused (comes into being) we must "look to something which neither begins nor ceases to be". I believe, however, that I can suggest why Fr. Hawkins thinks so. Causation, to him, is not only invariable connection, it is "the real counterpart of the relation of entailment" (p. 61). He thus assimilates "explaining" an

event by referring to its temporal cause, to "explaining" a proposition by referring to another proposition which entails it. Explanation in terms of temporal causation is the "real counterpart" of deductive proof. As "the real counterpart" of deductive proof, however, it must be supplemented. Just as a deductive proof which consisted of a chain of contingent propositions would not be a proof, so a satisfactory causal explanation could not consist of a chain of contingent temporal causes. Satisfactory deduction begins with necessary propositions; satisfactory causal explanation with necessary being.

It is, at the least, highly doubtful whether temporal causation is "the real counterpart" of entailment; certainly Fr. Hawkins's "summary account" of his fuller treatment of the topic in another work (pp. 23-24) fails to provide anything like a demonstration. However, even if this theory of causation is true, it does not follow that causal connections are anything more than the "real counterpart" of entailments between contingent propositions. That the connection between cause and effect is the "real counterpart" of entailment is one thing; it is quite another that causal explanation is the "real counterpart" of deductive proof from necessary premisses. Nor is the gap between the two to be bridged by confusing play with terms like "intelligible". If explanations in terms of temporal causation are judged by standards derived from deductive proof, they may indeed be convicted of "unintelligibility". But how is the application of such a standard to be justified? Certainly not by the practice of plain men or plain scientists. Whatever the analogies between them, the "intelligibility" yielded by ordinary causal explanations is distinct from the "intelligibility" sought by Fr. Hawkins. Unless some connection between them is established there is no reason for supposing that because the world is "intelligible" in terms of temporal causation, it must be "intelligible" in the theistic sense. For the existence of such a connection Fr. Hawkins offers no evidence whatever.

The principle that "if anything exists, a necessary being must exist" is not, therefore, derivable from temporal causation. Fr. Hawkins's claim that "casting our minds back" over his argument, we may observe "a development of the concept of cause . . . in no sense . . . arbitrary or gratuitous" (p. 43) must be rejected. The principle is not a development from temporal causation but an addition to it. It may be, however, that the principle, as Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange and others have asserted, is an independent necessary truth. If this is maintained, the objections to the whole conception of "necessary being", first raised by Hume (*Dialogues on Natural Religion*, IX; *Treatise*, I ii 6, I iii 7) and Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 592-603; B 620-630) must be met. It is instructive that (despite concessions in his fifth chapter) Fr. Hawkins makes no attempt to

do so. Instead, he informs us that "an elaborate refutation of (Kant's) opinions in detail" would be superfluous: Kant's system, like Hume's, is phenomenalist, and therefore thoroughly vicious (p. 62). This evasion is little short of scandalous. Not even Fr. Hawkins's redoubtable powers would be equal to demonstrating a connection between phenomenalism and Kant's objections to necessary being. In this matter, at least, Kant and Hume did not depart from purely logical considerations.

Their argument was, roughly, as follows. "Necessary" is a modal predicate, which refers primarily not to things, but to propositions; accordingly, in the expression "necessary being" it refers not to the being but to the proposition that the being exists. "Necessary being" is thus definable as "being of such a nature that the proposition that it exists is necessarily true". The most familiar necessary propositions are the formal propositions of logic: "Nothing can both have a quality and not have it" and the like. No existential proposition is of such a kind. But there are propositions like "The interior angles of a Euclidean triangle amount to two right angles" the denial of which can be shown to contradict something implicit in the nature of their subjects. If there should be any necessary existential proposition, it would presumably be of this kind: to deny it would contradict something implicit in the nature of its subject. Now, as Hume observed, "the idea of existence is nothing different from the idea of any object, . . . when after the simple conception of anything we would conceive it as existent, we in reality make no addition or alteration to our first idea" (*Treatise*, I iii 7). When we conceive a thing, whatever its nature, and then suppose it to exist, what we suppose to exist is the very same thing as we had conceived. Our supposition that it exists makes no addition or alteration to our concept of its nature. Existence, therefore, cannot be either added to or subtracted from the nature of a thing, for it is not conceptual at all. It makes no sense to speak of the existence of a thing as implicit in its nature. There can, therefore, be no contradiction in denying that anything exists. That is, there can be no necessary being.

This argument is not open to the Anselmian reply to Gaunilo, "In only one case is it legitimate to reason from concept to fact" (p. 66), for it rests on a perfectly general analysis. In expounding it, Kant did indeed use his celebrated example of the real and possible thalers, but only for illustration (*Critique*. A 599; B 627).

The most astonishing thing in Fr. Hawkins's book is that, having denied Kant's arguments to merit consideration in detail, he goes on, in his discussion of the ontological proof, implicitly to concede Kant's criticism of necessary being. "In general . . . it is impossible by beginning with mere concepts to end with anything save mere con-

cepts. That is why it is impossible to argue from the logical to the real order" (p. 68). Other Thomists are more consistent; they maintain that to argue from concept to existence is valid in the case of God, but that only God can grasp the argument, for only He can properly conceive the divine nature. (Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, Vol. I, page 68: "Without doubt, Thomists say, *in itself* the essence of God implies his existence . . . but the proposition, God exists, is not *in itself*, self-evident *for us*.") Fr. Hawkins does not point out the connection between his concession and Kant's criticism. If "it is impossible by beginning with mere concepts to end with anything save mere concepts", then there can be no being the nature of which implies its existence, that is, no necessary being. To cavil at Kant's formal reduction of the cosmological proof to the ontological (pp. 67-70) is too late in the day; Kant's interesting blunder (also exposed by Fr. T. A. Johnston in this journal, Volume XXI, pp. 14-15) does not invalidate his fundamental point: since there can be no inference from concepts to existence, there can be no necessary being; if there is no necessary being, the cosmological proof must go.

The chapter on "Infinite Being" is very confusing. To describe existence as "the fundamental energy by which things are what they are" (p. 72) would appear to distinguish existence from energies of a less fundamental sort. But, as all Thomists maintain, existence is not a genus. It is certainly true that "the nature of being is not closed but open; it passes over into and includes whatever is positive in the forms of being" (p. 72). Existence, in itself, is not tied to any one form of being, but is *indeterminate*. What, then, are we to think of Fr. Hawkins's continuation: "The nature of being is *constrained* to the limits within which we find it"? This implies that existence, of itself, is *unlimited in extent*. But if existence in itself is indeterminate, it is certainly *not* unlimited in extent: an infinite being is a determinate being. Yet Fr. Hawkins will have it that "the positive energy of being . . . in itself knows no limits" (p. 75)!

The latter half of the book, on the nature of God, was for me something of an anti-climax: contemporary philosophy is more concerned with the question whether a transcendent God exists, than with the deduction of His attributes. Nevertheless, it contains much of interest. First, it may help discredit the legend that, whatever the traditional proofs may prove, it is not the traditional God. Secondly, it introduces and applies the method of analogy (*via eminentiae*) which underlies much of the mature thought of St. Thomas and his successors. There are, certainly, some surprising things. Two examples: "To be real without that dissipation of existence which is spatial extension is to be more perfect than

anything corporeal" (p. 77); "Mindless fact is no sufficient foundation for universal characters and universal laws" (p. 88). Nevertheless, accepting the existence of an infinite transcendent being, the conclusions Fr. Hawkins draws about the perfections which must be analogically attributed to it are, on the whole, convincing.

Eternity Fr. Hawkins allows to be a difficult problem. The vexation is that "eternity . . . positive as it must be in itself, can only be known to us dimly and negatively" (p. 79). Our own minds provide a finite analogue of immateriality, but for eternity we have no finite analogue—our minds, like our bodies, are in time. "We are left with a purely negative concept which we know to connote something unknown which is eminently positive, but it is a compensation that this is enough for us, since we are genuinely capable of thinking and not merely imagining" (p. 81). Necessary being we know to be eternal: "there can be no before and after in God, for this implies a changeability which is incompatible with necessary and perfect being" (p. 81). If we abandoned "necessary being" matters would, of course, stand differently.

Fr. Hawkins's remarks on the problems for theism presented by evil and free-will are sane and do illuminate the issues. The last word may be left to him. "The evils in the world will always present a difficulty to the imagination, but they can be made acceptable at least to the intellect" (p. 143). (I would add that the argument —pp. 142-3—by which animal suffering is made "acceptable to the intellect" has not made it acceptable to mine.) And on free-will: "The theory of physical premotion insisted rightly that a created will is never exempt from divine omnipotence, and . . . the theory of *scientia media* was nevertheless . . . trying to do justice to our full sense of moral responsibility. These two exigencies must govern any attempt to throw light on the relation of divine omnipotence and created free-will" (p. 136).

The Essentials of Theism will undoubtedly be popular. Fr. Hawkins's style is pleasant; in exposition, especially, his lucidity and wit are occasionally reminiscent of a very different philosopher, Bertrand Russell. But the resemblance is to Russell at his brilliant worst—in the tendentious passages of *The History of Western Philosophy*. Russell declares St. Thomas to be "in a sense insincere"; Fr. Hawkins (without publishing evidence) finds "the lack of even an ordinary degree of philosophical subtlety" to be characteristic of Locke. Not only is much contemporary philosophy (no names!) under the "fatal attraction" of "Hume's intellectual suicide", but (according to the dust-cover, which presumably has Fr. Hawkins's sanction) "the alleged refutation (of the Thomist proofs that God exists) was a confidence trick played on the public by Immanuel Kant".

After this, we are not surprised at the Johnsonian arrogance of the introduction: "We merely claim to offer reasoning which is in itself logically demonstrative"; any disagreement is wilful: "A man cannot help seeing what he sees, but he can refuse to turn his eyes to see it, and he can turn his eyes away and refuse to look at it again" (p. 12). In other words: "Sir, I have provided you with an argument; I am not obliged to provide you with an understanding!" In genuine controversy, each party must be at pains to understand what the other has to say, and this sort of thing does not make for it. Instead it threatens, in a subject which more than most requires careful and dispassionate study, the prolongation of a dismal gang-warfare.

ALAN DONAGAN.

A CALENDAR OF BRITISH TASTE FROM 1600-1800, BEING A MUSEUM OF SPECIMENS AND LANDMARKS CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED BY E. F. CARRITT. (Routledge and Kegan Paul. 247 + xiii + 26 pp.) Price (U.K.), 21s.

This is a chronologically systematised commonplace book, containing such extracts from Mr. Carritt's unusually diversified reading as he takes to illustrate the vicissitudes of taste (in the narrower sense, in which it implies education) over a period of two hundred years; taste, not only in literature, but in all the arts, and many of the amenities of life. ("Lord Rokeby, a very singular man who allows his beard to grow, eats only raw meat.") It does not pretend to be complete or, in any absolute sense, "representative"; very clearly, indeed, one can discern the influence of Mr. Carritt's personal interests. (There are forty-seven references to Oxford as against only seven to Cambridge, and the major changes in the architecture of Mr. Carritt's own college, University, are described with disproportionate care.)

Some of the entries, it must also be confessed, are more than a little mysterious to anyone not possessed of the connections which render them, in Mr. Carritt's eyes, significant. What is the importance of the fact, for example, that in 1621 "The Archbishop of Canterbury, shooting buck, killed a gamekeeper with a cross-bow"? Why are the wine bills of Eton of such interest that they are mentioned on seven different occasions? Very often, no doubt, entries which at first startle by their apparent irrelevance begin to make sense as one reads on, and in the end there is laid bare a pattern of taste of which one was previously unaware. But in many cases one is left wondering, and occasionally can only conclude that Mr. Carritt's obvious love for out-of-the-way facts has led him to stray from his main path.

This book will most often be used as a reference work; from this point of view, it has certain technical deficiencies, some of which might perhaps be removed in subsequent editions. The present method

of indexing, under which "Hell, 62, 132" means "Hell, entries under 1662, 1732", is extremely puzzling to the casual reader (who naturally takes "62, 132" to be page references), and it remains a niggling irritation, even after the initial mystery has been dispelled. References are also inadequate. "Eliz. Montague, Letter" is discouraging, to say the least, and entries like "Lord Pembroke to Lord Herbert" or "Sophia Lee, *A Chapter of Accidents*" are even worse; one simply does not know what significance these sources have as indications of contemporary opinion, and the task of tracing the references would be no sinecure. Sometimes, an earlier reference will help, but a proper bibliographical apparatus is obviously essential in a work of this kind.

With all its weaknesses, however, this is a constantly fascinating work, although it is the historian rather than the critic (except in so far as it illustrates what he already knows only too well, his limitations) who will derive most profit from its pages.

J. A. PASSMORE.

DEVIATION INTO SENSE: THE NATURE OF EXPLANATION. By O. S. Wauchope. (Faber, 1948. 163 pp.) Price (U.K.), 12s. 6d.

The author of this book believes new beginnings in philosophy to be too few; he does not pause to reflect that what purport to be such beginnings are only too many, and that rarely have there been more and more ill-considered attempts than at the present day. At least, rarely, if ever, have so many been published; and it is a question to ask seriously, "Why?". Since Mr. Wauchope, to judge by his references, is not altogether ignorant of the history of the subject, one can only wonder that he should attribute novelty to his own "wild plunge", and that he should have chosen to present his views bereft of the more serious support they receive from their original contexts.

Mr. Wauchope's principal thesis is that the business of the philosopher is "to say something such that, if it were true, everything would be as it is. It is to explain experience. It is to hit on a unifying formula, a contradiction-eliminating formula" (p. 10). Mr. Wauchope hits upon unity in difference (pp. 18-19) and the meaninglessness of absolute objectivity (p. 12). He expands the first formula by saying that "if, by the process of progressively naming namings, you reached a point at which only two names . . . were together inclusive of all the things in the universe, then one more step would bring you to the goal of all philosophising" (p. 25). He brings us to this goal on the very next page when he gives the two names as "mind" and "matter", and their unity as "self, life, mind, the soul", thus satisfying his second formula also.

Elsewhere he says that the reader has only to say "I", and "the rest is mere reasoning; and almost anybody can reason" (p. 9). As an example of his own reasoning we might take the statement that "a man has but to acknowledge that he is a self, and by implication he has allowed that there is a subjective factor in all awareness" (pp. 11-12). If this is the identity, "in all knowings what knows is a knower", then this fact should cause no concern to an author whose aim is to obtain a proposition "such that, if it were true, everything would be as it is". If, however, it is not an identity, but the significant though false proposition that "in all knowings what is known is the knower", or if the latter proposition is believed to follow from the identity above (which it clearly does not), then it may worry Mr. Wauchope to realise that he is in the company of innumerable others in believing these commonplaces of Cartesianism. He is only less generous than Descartes in not believing that reason is the lot of all men equally: but on this point he would appear to be right.

It would not be fair to take Mr. Wauchope at his word when he says in the Introduction that if his first chapter is refuted, the rest of the book is nonsense; but it is only just to say that most of the many expositions of Idealism that do not disdain that name are infinitely more worthy of refutation than that contained in this chapter. Among the later chapters are ones on Biology, Psychology, Sociology, and Aesthetics, which purport to illustrate the author's thesis. They lean heavily on a distinction between self-preservative and spontaneous behaviour, which might interestingly have been developed had it not been identified with the author's other formulae, and had the distinction between the human and the non-human not been so ruthlessly transcended.

P. C. Gibbons.

BOOKS RECEIVED

(Mention in this list neither precludes nor guarantees later review.)

Thou Art Peter. By A. D. Howell Smith. (C. A. Watts, 1950. x + 829 pp.) Price (U.K.), 21s.

A critical historical survey of the dogmas and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Road to Love. By Gwilym O. Roberts. (Allen and Unwin, 1950. xxiii + 230 pp.) Price (U.K.), 9s. 6d.

A History of Mountaineering in the Alps. By Claire Eliane Engel. (Allen and Unwin, 1950. 296 pp.) Price (U.K.), 21s.

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Psychology and Mental Health. By J. A. Hadfield. (Allen and Unwin, 1950. 444 pp.) Price (U.K.), 18s.

The Way to God. By Maxwell Silver. (Philosophical Library, 1950. x + 303 pp.) Price, $3.00.

Out of My Later Years. By Albert Einstein. (Philosophical Library, 1950. viii + 282 pp.) Price, $4.75.
A collection of mainly short essays and notes written between 1933 and 1949.

Reflections of a Physicist. By P. W. Bridgman. (Philosophical Library, 1950. xii + 392 pp.) Price, $5.00.
Non-technical writings, touching upon scientific method, the philosophy of science, and the social role of science: the author's approach is "operational".

An Inquiry into the Principles and Policy of the Government of the United States. By John Taylor of Caroline; with an Introduction by R. F. Nichols. (Kegan Paul, 1950. 562 pp.) Price (U.K.), 35s.
The first volume to appear in a series entitled "Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science". The *Inquiry* was originally published in 1814, in criticism of John Adams and the Federalists.

Disagreements. By R. C. Churchill. (Secker and Warburg, 1950. 276 pp.) Price (U.K.), 12s. 6d.
A discussion of the relation between culture and democracy.

Rūmī, Poet and Mystic. Translations from his writings, with an Introduction and Notes, by Reynold A. Nicholson. (Allen and Unwin, 1950. 190 pp.) Price (U.K.), 8s. 6d.

Freud or Jung. By Edward Glover. (Allen and Unwin, 1950. 207 pp.) Price (U.K.), 15s.
A systematic criticism of Jung's psychology (including his views on politics, religion, and art) from an orthodox Freudian point of view.

The Illusion of Immortality. By Corliss Lamont. (Philosophical Library, 1950. xvii + 316 pp.) Price, $3.95.
Second edition: this book was first published in 1935.

Saggio sulla Dialettica della Realtà spirituale. By Gallo Galli. (Gheroni, Torino, 1950. 255 pp.)
Third edition.

Atoms of Thought. By George Santayana. (Philosophical Library, 1950. xv + 284 pp.) Price, $5.00.
An anthology of paragraphs from Santayana's works.

AROUND THE JOURNALS

LOGIC AND EPISTEMOLOGY: R. Firth (*Philosophical Review*, 350) discusses the "argument from perceptual relativity against radical empiricism", i.e., the argument that the meaning of any physical statement goes beyond that of any conjunction of statements about sense-data. In *Mind*, 234, there is a long critical notice by S. Hampshire of Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*, J. N. Findlay reviews Husserl's *Erfahrung und Urteil*, and D. Pears continues discussion of the "synthetic necessary truth" that nothing can be red and green all over. In *Analysis*, 15, D. Pears discusses some of the difficulties in treating general and singular hypotheticals as truth-functional statements, and D. J. O'Connor criticises Ayer's reformulation of the verification principle, arguing that it is no more stringent than his previous formulation, and also leads to confusions about direct and indirect verifiability. Asher Moore (*Journal of Philosophy*, 47, 7) criticises Ayer's type of phenomenalism. M. Boll and J. Reinhardt (*Revue Philosophique*, 1950, 4-6) refer to many-valued logics, but maintain that the two-valued logic is a necessary and sufficient foundation for the modalities and for the calculus of probability. H. Veatch (*Modern Schoolman*, 27, 3) defends the syllogism in contrast to mathematical logic on the ground that the syllogism alone leads to conclusions about things and causes. J. R. Jones (*Philosophy*, 93) discusses our knowledge of other persons and the analogy on which it is said to be based.

MORALS AND POLITICS: W. Kneale (*Philosophy*, 93) defends objectivity in morals by reference to a moral law which, however, turns out to be objective only in a limited sense. In the same number C. A. Campbell defends "the life according to reason" and C. D. Broad notes some common fallacies in political thinking. J. W. Smith (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 11, 2) traces the development of the notion of moral sense or approval from Shaftesbury to Hume, and argues that Hume's psychologism (i.e., subjectivism) rests on a confusion. D. H. Newhall (*Journal of Philosophy*, 47, 4) tries to bridge the gap between fact and value by means of the "property of requiredness", while J. O. Urmson (*Mind*, 234) thinks that the practice of grading apples throws light on the meaning of "good". In the *Journal of Philosophy* T. G. Cook reviews Lord Acton's *Essays on Freedom and Power* (47, 4) H. Kamins criticises C. I. Lewis for

treating value as a secondary, whereas it is really a tertiary quality (47, 6), and M. M. Rossi has an interesting review of Gentile's *Genesi e struttura della società*, which explains the relation of Gentile's political decisions to his theory (47, 8). A. C. Ewing (*Philosophical Review*, 350) praises J. D. Mabbott's *The State and the Citizen*.

GENERAL: S. M. Brown (*Journal of Philosophy*, 47, 6) criticises the aesthetic theory of C. I. Lewis. Martin Gardner (*J. Phil.*, 47, 7) delightfully satirises the anthropological treatment of mathematics as culturally relative. E. L. Mossner (*Phil. Rev.*, 350) presents evidence about Hume's character and motives. J. H. Groth (*J. Hist. Ideas*, 11, 2) recalls Wilamowitz's criticism of Neitzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, and deplores the lack of attention given even by the academic world to the sound scholars when they oppose those who rely on "genius" and "intuition". V. Cauchy (*Modern Schoolman*, 27, 3) discusses the nature and genesis of "the skeptic attitude" as exemplified by Sextus Empiricus, and L. Sillman (*International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 30, 2) discusses the popularity of monotheism, suggesting that this is due to the atheism latent in monotheism, which leads to a more thorough testing and grasp of reality.